University of Alberta

On Mosques and Malls: An Analysis of Khomeinism as a Locus of Resistance to the Spread of Global Consumer Culture

by

Daniel John Webb

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Master of Arts*

Department of *Political Science*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the concepts of globalization and resistance to the globalizing process. Through a Marxist political-economic analysis, I argue that in fact globalization simply represents the logical extension of capitalism to a global scale, marked by the complementary spread of the culture/ideology of capitalism – Western consumer culture – to the entire world. Thus, it is argued, to identify genuine sites of resistance to globalization, one must look to social movements or cultural forms that challenge consumerism. In this context, I examine the 20th century phenomenon that is widely perceived as the most prominent source of resistance to contemporary globalization – the rise of militant Islam, or, Islamic Fundamentalism. By using the Islamic Revolution in Iran as a case study, I illustrate how one can conceptualize militant Islam, in this case Khomeinism, as such a locus of resistance, by virtue of its overt anti-consumerist discourse, and the policies of the Islamic state that act to discourage consumerism indirectly. With this in mind, I conclude by extrapolating ideas observed in the functioning of the Islamic Republic, and speculating on the possibility of incorporating them into a secular Western anti-consumerist movement.

Keywords: Globalization, anti-globalization, consumerism, consumer culture, international political economy, neoliberalism, cultural imperialism, Leslie Sklair, hegemony, Antonio Gramsci, Islam, Islamic Fundamentalism, Islamic theory, Iranian Revolution, Khomeini, Khomeinism, culture heroes.

Preface

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of globalization, for those who fear the gradual cultural homogenization that accompanies it, is that it is such a comprehensive process that there seems to be no alternative. For example, governments that wish to pick and choose those parts of globalization they want to embrace, and those they want to reject, are regularly defeated by the seemingly unlimited influence of big business. Progressive political leaders have tried, and ultimately failed, to implement policies that attempt to deflect globalization while still wanting to stay connected globally. Oskar Lafontaine, former German finance minister, and chairman of the Social Democratic party, is a case in point. He lasted a mere six months at his post before his traditional socialist economic policies were deemed too costly and considered dangerous to Germany's global competitiveness. A week after Lafontaine resigned, on March 17, 1999 the Deutsche Bank announced record profits. Ulrich Rippert sums up the Lafontaine episode well:

> Six months after the German national elections, big business has essentially corrected the election result in its favour. The development has many elements of a putsch. People who have been voted for by no one – and represent nothing other than their own narrow-minded interests and that of their business organizations – put the elected government under massive pressure and thereby determined the political course of the country (http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/mar1999/lafo-m24.shtml).

At the state level, truly leftist regulatory, redistributive policies are no longer considered to be viable on a large scale. A brief survey of the well-established, traditional leftist parties of the core, attests to this fact. The Democrats in the US, the NDP in Canada, Labour in Britain, Israel, and Australia, and the Social Democrats in Germany, have all gradually moved toward the centre of the political spectrum and adopted neoliberalism as a guiding principle behind their national policies. It is unclear, whether this shift to the right represents a true ideological commitment, or whether it is simply a survival mechanism, designed to placate business interests. However, it seems clear that the days of the truly comprehensive welfare state are over (for now at least). The simple fact is that countries are too interdependent, capital is too mobile, and currency speculation is too powerful, for it to be any other way. As long as the global system is still composed of nation-states, competing with each other for foreign investment, highly skilled labour, consumer market shares, and

so on, the world will be directed by market forces, creating further wealth and poverty, powerful corporations and weak states, winners and losers, consumers and *consumers*. This is the reality and the inevitability of globalization.

But, what if there was a possibility (if not a plausibility) of an alternative? And what if this were not an alternative that necessitated the establishment of some sort of global welfare state dictatorship? What if there was an alternative system, a system that an individual state could implement, which would reject the key tenets of globalization *and* keep its people happy? Perhaps there is.

The thought of such an alternative came to me after coming across a statement by Thomas L. Friedman, an unapologetic supporter of globalization, in his book The Lexus and the Olive Tree: "If you think you can retreat permanently into an artificially constructed third space, and enjoy all the rising living standards of the Fast World without any of the pressures, you are really fooling yourself and your people" (343). Friedman may be right, but only if you accept his Western definition of "rising living standards." What does he mean by this? Essentially, he is referring to all the defining characteristics of a middle/upper class Western lifestyle: relatively high income, stable and meaningful employment, access to quality education and healthcare, and the possession and convenience of modern consumer goods. It is difficult to deny that this seems to be what people want, *everywhere*. And, it is difficult to deny that satisfying employment and access to some form of education and healthcare should be considered fundamental human rights. It is fairly safe to say that these are genuine human needs (until you start to define them in purely Western terms, where a "good job" is defined by its pay level, education with universities, and healthcare with Western medical science. *There are* different ways to conceive of these categories!). But what about the ability to consume, and more specifically, to consume *conspicuously*? This is also considered a major component of enjoying a high "standard of living." In this thesis, I will attempt to discredit the seemingly inevitable link between happiness and conspicuous consumption, asserting that it is in large part a Eurocentric, ideological construct, encouraged by, and an integral part of the global capitalist project. There are many examples of individuals and small communities across the world that have effectively rejected this ideal. They live a

fulfilling and meaningful existence based on a non-materialist ethical code. They are content to live without possessing unnecessary consumer goods, and as such, do not require well-paying, and time consuming employment. But what if this anti-consumerist lifestyle, alive and well in isolated hippy and religious communes, was adopted by the majority of the population in a contemporary country and reflected in the policies of the state? Could it survive, despite being surrounded by a fiercely competitive, globalized international system? I cannot pretend to know the answer to this, but it does seem possible. However, it would require a major ideological commitment by the population in question and a willingness to live in relative isolation from the rest of the world. Anti-consumerism would have to become a defining characteristic of the collective national consciousness. If this was ever realized: foreign and domestic capital *would* leave; uncommitted professionals, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and skilled labourers *would* look for work in countries with more competitive wages; the global money markets *would* retract all confidence in the state's currency resulting in a radical devaluation and rampant inflation. However, in the ideal state of which I speak, this would all be largely irrelevant. As long as "basic needs" were met, the population would be happy. In short, if a population's expectations, what they *want* from the state, and life in general, is qualitatively different than that of the population constituting the rest of the system, then it is possible to reject that system almost in its entirety. Globalization can be rejected without the suffering of the people, because their definition of suffering is no longer framed in a Western-consumerist framework.

Of course, this is a very idealist concept, utopian perhaps. I am writing about it, not so much prescriptively, but analytically, as one of the only theoretical alternatives to global cultural homogenization. It is my assertion that there are real-life examples of states that have attempted this sort of counter-hegemonic strategy. It is in this context that I will examine the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. I aim to prove that during the period of 1979-1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini attempted to create an anti-consumerist society, not only directly through policy initiatives, but also in the realm of national consciousness through the medium of Islam.

I should qualify myself from the outset, that this project is not intended to glorify the Iranian state and its actions. I aspire to analytical objectivity, neither condoning nor condemning specific Iranian policies like the enforced veiling of women, or the totalitarian actions of the "morality police." Further, I perceive Khomeinism as simply one form, or interpretation of Islam. I try to avoid sweeping generalizations regarding Islam, or stereotype Muslims as a whole, as I recognize the vast diversity of thought and behaviour that exists within the religion. In short, I am extremely conscious of the "orientalizing" tendencies of Western academics and seek to avoid this within my own work. But surely there will be some examples where I will falter in this regard and I apologize in advance. I have not lived in Iran, nor visited, and as such cannot pretend to wholly understand Iranian culture in all its complexity. As such, I have tried to resist making any general claims regarding the nature of this culture, and where I do, it is only with the support and insight of those intimately familiar with it. My arguments tend to be more structural than cultural. While Islamic theory is heavily relied on, the real-life effects of the Iranian state's policies are the primary objects of analysis.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In July 2001, an estimated 100,000 protestors besieged the Italian city of Genoa to voice their dissent at the G-8 convention. It was the most recent and largest to date of a long string of such mass anti-globalization protests, commonly recognized to have begun with the OECD convention in 1999 in Seattle. Like its predecessors, Genoa was marked by violent clashes between protestors and riot police, but it also enjoys the dubious distinction of being the first to suffer a fatal casualty. During the confrontation outside the conference, a 23-year-old native of Rome was shot and killed by a 20-year-old Italian military conscript. Many feel this occurrence will only serve to intensify future actions and galvanize the anti-globalization movement's resolve.

In the wake of all this, an interesting transformation has quietly taken place. Whereas once international media attention focussed on what was actually going on inside these conferences, now the focus is mainly on what happens outside. The protests are increasingly the main story, while the meetings act as mere subtext. Thus, the general population is absorbing ideas regarding globalization from a different perspective, that is, the perspective of the protestors – a dissenting lens. This then, seems to make it an appropriate time to engage in discussion surrounding not only the nature of globalization, but the nature of *resistance* to the process; a topic that deserves as much attention as globalization itself.

It is best to begin with what we know. We know that we live in an extremely large, populous, socially diverse and complex world; a world with unlimited potentialities, realities, and ways of knowing. And yet, we are constantly informed that the earth is fast becoming a single unit – shrinking by virtue of scientific, technological, and economic advancements. This is globalization, a catchall descriptor that has come to define the late 20th century, and promises to redefine the 21st. While all over the world, pockets of apparent resistance exist to this globalizing process, they are cursorily written off as representing a primordial, anti-modern ethos that simply fears change; an anachronism that will surely disappear in the unstoppable flow of globalization.

This raises two fundamental questions for scholars of globalization. First, is globalization a natural and inevitable process? Second, what does it mean to *resist* globalization, and consequently, how does one identify resistance when it is manifested? The debate surrounding this dual problematic has been a focal point within the social sciences for the past decade, and one that will surely not be resolved anytime soon. But this leads me to the central argument I intend to make in this thesis: globalization is not an inevitable and natural outcome of human "progress," and as such, can be resisted and replaced by alternative approaches to social and economic organization. Further, the most effective way in which to challenge the current process of globalization is through the rejection of consumerism, and thus, one must search for dissenting social movements, or indeed, entire cultures, characterized by a strong anti-consumerist ethos, to identify genuine loci of resistance to globalization. In this regard, I assert that a salient and potentially disruptive example of such contemporary counter-hegemonic groups are the various forms of Islamic fundamentalism that have risen to prominence in the 20th century, including Khomeinism, which I use as a case study to illustrate this point.

This thesis is divided into two sections. The first develops a theoretical framework in which to conceptualize globalization and its connection to consumerism. The second half examines fundamentalist Islam and the Iranian revolution in the context of this framework to illustrate how they might represent a threat to globalization by virtue of their inherent anti-consumerism. By integrating the two sections, the goal is to extract ideas and principles from the latter section, and briefly speculate on their possible utility to a more Western, liberal-democratic, anti-consumerist movement.

I should qualify from the outset that in no way do I advocate the direct and unadulterated adoption of policies of the Iranian regime. Instead, I am simply interested in exploring, in some cases, the underlying motivations and principles of specific Islamic precepts, and in others, the social consequences of particular Iranian policies, in order to see if the Western anti-globalization movement can learn anything from them. Thus, anything extracted would necessarily be decontextualized and secularized for this purpose. I realize that my argument may seem quite counter-

intuitive at times because, essentially, I am asking the question: what ideas can Westerners adopt from the example of something most Westerners naturally recoil against? This I think makes my thesis challenging in that some might show unwillingness to accept it based on my inspirational model, but at the same time, I feel it may lend a certain novelty in terms of approach, as it seems rare that critical Western scholars of globalization look to fundamentalist Islam for purposes of remedial reference.

In chapter two, I explore the concept of globalization. Beginning with Karl Marx's and Vladimir Lenin's ideas of capitalist expansion – "centralization of capitals" and "capitalism-as-imperialism" respectively – I illustrate how capitalism, by its very nature, needs to constantly enjoy increasing rates of profit, which (among other strategies) dictates it seek out and create new markets until the entire globe is saturated by capitalist social relations. In agreement with Lenin, I assert, this is represented in the early years of capitalism by European imperialism. A Marxist understanding of the expansive nature of capitalism lays the groundwork for my analysis of globalization as simply the logical extension of the capitalist system. As I discuss later, the complementary themes of centralization of capitals and imperialism, are represented in contemporary globalization by international corporate mergers and the spread of Western consumer culture respectively, making them extremely valuable conceptual aides.

Next, I examine an article by Kees van der Pijl that in many ways posits an updated version of Lenin's theory of imperialism. Van der Pijl argues that since the Industrial revolution, the world has gradually been conquered (overtly and covertly) by what he calls the "Lockeian Heartland." Wherever the "Heartland" has spread, capitalist social relations have been established and consolidated by "transnational elite networks" (TENs) – international organizations whose interests lie solely in ensuring the conditions for unimpeded free marketing are secure wherever they set up shop. The conditions that he argues are necessary to effective capitalism, include liberal democratic political structures and Western liberal values in general. The relevance of Van der Pijl's analysis is to show how capitalist social networks, from the Industrial revolution to the present, were paramount in establishing the global

capitalist project. This line of thought challenges the assumption that capitalism is a purely natural process, and that specific cultural dimensions need to be established to ensure capitalism prospers.

From here, I go on to explore Dependency and World Systems Theory, as further support for my assertion of the synonymous nature of globalization and capitalism. By showing that even after formal independence, a *de facto* dependence was still present in the Third World, Dependency Theory was important in illustrating the global division of labour systemic to global capitalism. My understanding of World Systems Theory comes largely through a reading of Immanuel Wallerstein. Essentially expounding a sophisticated version of Dependency Theory, Wallerstein argues that indeed only one international economic system exists and that is the capitalist world system. As such, he claims all member nations of the world, despite official national economic doctrines (e.g., socialism), are members of said system. Wallerstein's global division of labour is characterized by a core, a periphery, and a semi-periphery. All three are essential to the operation of, and to ensure balance within, the global capitalist system. His account is crucial as it serves to illustrate how complicated conceptualizing resistance to capitalism can be.[1]

I conclude chapter two with a discussion of "Global Systems Theory." The brainchild of Leslie Sklair, Global Systems divides world capitalist activity into three spheres: 1) economic; 2) political; and 3) culture-ideological. In this thesis, I focus on the third sphere – culture-ideological – represented by the culture-ideology of consumerism. Modern production techniques and increasingly lower manufacturing costs have resulted in an ability to produce consumer goods at an unprecedented speed and scale. Thus he claims, Western style consumer culture acts as the lifeblood of global capitalism because without it, consumption would not keep up with production, which might result in a crisis of over-production similar to the situation in the 1930s. For capitalism to survive and grow, it demands that the entire globe adopt consumer culture. Therefore, to fight capitalism, one must fight consumerism.

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[1] By way of example, he asserts that the Soviet Union did not represent a genuine threat to the capitalist world system because it was simply a semi-peripheral nation striving to reach core status.

With this established, I move on to chapter three, which focuses more specifically on consumerism. I begin by exploring the meaning of consumerism, asserting that it is not simply a manifestation of human nature, but a carefully fostered ideology that has come to dominate the Western collective consciousness. Consumerism is more than the process of consumption. It is distinguished by the motive to consume (e.g., envy provocation, status seeking, feelings of inadequacy), and the external conditions that facilitate the process. In terms of the latter consideration – the external conditions – I draw a brief history of what I call the "shopping infrastructure" to illustrate the increasing ease and frequency with which Western subjects can consume. Further, I show how changes in the very nature of some consumer products have encouraged and perpetuated constant buying, that is, all kinds of "disposable" products and the more abstract notion of "fashion," which creates entire industries based on goods that become obsolete soon after they are purchased resulting in a need to buy more.

However, in a consumer culture, subjects are by no means trusted to continue their conspicuous behaviour patterns. Thus, they must be constantly poked and prodded to do so. This is the role the advertising industry performs. I argue that advertising serves to promote and intensify consumerism through the pursuit of two primary strategies: 1) the fetishization of commodities; and 2) the ubiquitous dissemination of images encouraging consumption. The first strategy is represented in the concept of the corporate "logo." Logos, and the aura surrounding them, create false perceptions of the products to which they are associated. Products become fetishized because the consumer's motivation to buy is intimately associated with the image portrayed by the logo, as opposed to the reality of the product. The second strategy – ubiquitous dissemination of images – is simply reflected by the increasing amount of public space being filled by advertisements. It is a marketing maxim that in this ultra-competitive market place, potential customers must be exposed to one's logo or brand name constantly. Advertising not only conveys images of products and their respective logos, but also consumerist values and lifestyles. As a result, no space can be left "unbranded."

The second part of chapter three deals with the process of the expansion of Western consumer culture to the rest of the world. As noted in chapter two, this process is integral to the survival and growth of capitalism and constitutes the culture-ideological sphere of globalization. Thus, any traditional culture or mores that serve to obstruct the growth of capitalism must be uprooted and replaced with a consumption-oriented model. Beginning with a structural analysis of international institutions (the UN, World Bank, IMF) and their underlying neoliberal ideology, I illustrate the extent to which the international system facilitates this process. These institutions have created an environment hostile to any social form or development strategy that deviates from Western liberal democratic principles. This implicitly includes consumerism as a fundamental underlying feature of social organization.

I then go on to illustrate how this process occurs; that is, how consumerism takes hold of a society. I argue that essentially, through the actions and policies of neoliberal transnational elites, poorer countries are flooded with Western consumer goods. At first the only local demographic groups that can afford these items are the rich. Thus, ownership of such goods becomes a symbol of wealth and prestige. Through the process of envy formation, the desire for such products is transmitted down to the lower classes, and consumerism begins to take seed. However, the availability of, and prestige attached to, consumer goods is not the only factor to consider when looking at the global expansion of consumer culture. The agents of neoliberalism bring more than products; they also bring *images*, the most powerful transmitters of culture. Consistent with Marx's theory of centralization of capitals, I illustrate the growing number of massive mergers occurring in the international mass media/entertainment industry and how the resultant conglomerates are not only dominating international media transmissions but also how these corporations are generally Western based and primarily emit images depicting and promoting Western values and lifestyles. Connected to this is of course the bombardment of product advertising that accompanies the process (although it is increasingly difficult to identify where "entertainment" begins and advertising starts). This then constitutes the conclusion of the first section of my thesis.

The second half of this project is an exploration of contemporary Islamic fundamentalist thought and policy as representing a challenge to globalization by virtue of its anti-consumerist underpinnings. Islamic fundamentalism, I argue, is the most significant anti-hegemonic force in the world today due in large part to the mass support it enjoys, and the absolute commitment of many of its adherents. In this context, the underlying thought and policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are examined as a case study to illustrate how an attempt was made to take abstract anti-consumerist thought and implement it at the level of real policy.

Chapter six focuses specifically on the concept of conformity and how certain Islamic precepts can inherently act to encourage conformative behaviour. My primary assertion here is that any society that *explicitly* discourages individualism in the social realm, seriously impedes consumerism, that is, an intimate relationship exists between liberal conceptions of individualism and consumerism. In this regard, I look at key Islamic dictates like the importance of the *umma* (the global Islamic community), the encouragement of moderation in all aspects of lifestyle, and the denunciation of Western style clothing and fashion, all of which lend to a form of social conceptualization in which the collective is valued over and above the individual (in contrast to Western culture where increasingly the individual and her liberty is treated as paramount to all other social considerations).

Next I turn to the controversial topic of women in Islam *vis-a-vis* consumer culture. The crux of my argument is that the gendered social dichotomy that Islamic fundamentalism tends to advocate, which constructs men and women as having clearly differentiated natural attributes and divinely appointed social roles, means that, in Iran women have been generally relegated almost exclusively to participation in the private sphere of society. This, I assert, has anti-consumerist consequences in that it inhibits a large portion of society from its full consumption potential. Further, I look at the concept of the *chador* (full body veil) that women are forced to wear in revolutionary Iran. The enforced adornment of the chador acts to partially negate some of the most significant driving forces of Western consumerism, i.e., envy provocation, "public beauty competitions," and "branding." Finally, I conclude this chapter with an analysis of Khomeini's use of the media for purposes of promoting

the revolution. While by no means did a free press exist in pre-revolutionary Iran, the Khomeinist regime regulated it even more closely than its predecessor. But within the context of this thesis, the most important point regarding the revolutionary media apparatus, is not so much that Khomeini restricted transmissions exclusively to those promoting the revolution and Islamic ideals, but more that he prevented nearly all foreign images from entering Iran. As noted earlier, the most powerful factor in the spread of Western consumer culture is the absolutely ubiquitous propagation of Western images in traditional societies. By ensuring these images reached the general Iranian populace only on a minimal level, Khomeini retained complete semiotic control of the revolution and by extension, seriously impeded the pre-revolutionary encroachment of Western consumerist values.

Chapter seven reflects on Islamic economics as interpreted by some fundamentalist Muslims in general, and those implemented specifically by the Khomeinist regime. By contrasting Islamic economic principles with those that define the current global economic system, I assert that once again the viability of consumerism is threatened. For example, the central importance of Islamic taxes (*zakat* and *khoms*) to building society makes taxation an inviolable necessity. Thus, no debate on reducing taxes (to free up money on individual consumption) can exist (as it does in the West) because God ordains taxes, and indeed the specific rate of taxation. Another example is the Islamic denunciation of usury, or interest. In a world economy driven by currency speculation and returns on investment, a sudden banning of these financial strategies would certainly prove disastrous. And finally, a less specific Muslim precept that renders "waste" in financial transactions a sin, directly challenges a driving force of capitalist consumerism.

Chapter eight breaks from the more empirical nature of the previous chapters and enters the realm of discourse analysis. Borrowing a concept from Herbert Marcuse – culture heroes – I examine some of the key Islamic personalities that are constructed and promoted as representations of the ideal Muslim. Exploring the popular depictions of culture heroes assists one in isolating and understanding the key principles and underlying value systems on which any given society operates. In the case of Iran, I look specifically at four individuals – *Ali*, *Husayn*, *Khomeini*, and

Fatima – to develop a discursive picture of the ideal Muslim as the ideal anti-consumer. In most cases, the myths associated with these figures correspond directly to the ideas I explore in the previous chapters.

I conclude this project in chapter nine where I attempt to synthesize the ideas explored in section one and two, to form some sort of framework through which to speculate on ideas regarding how to challenge consumerism, by extracting lessons from the examples of Islamic fundamentalism and revolutionary Iran. The intent is to stimulate thought regarding the possibility of applying these ideas in some form within a Western democratic context, that is, asking the question: is it possible for Western anti-consumerist social movements to appropriate all or some of the Islamic principles and Khomeinist policies expounded in this thesis, and essentially, secularize them and use them in promoting a counter-hegemonic social alternative to consumer culture? This chapter is extremely speculative and primarily intended to raise issues for further discussion. I should reiterate that I am certainly not advocating the institution of a global Islamic theocracy, nor am I intending to endorse the policies of Khomeinist Iran. Instead, one should understand this project as attempting to objectively identify and describe a significant anti-consumerist movement, isolating and analyzing key features that make it so, and then speculating on whether these features can be modified and incorporated into a completely different socio-historic context.

Chapter 2: Global Capitalism

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. . . . Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there (Dickens, Hard Times 283).

Globalization is one of the most regularly used concepts in contemporary social science and yet one of the most ill defined. The term is thrown around loosely, and its definition assumed, by academics of all stripes. For some, globalization simply represents the logical and natural extension of the project of modernization; a process which will finally ensure mass prosperity and enlightenment on a truly global scale. For others, it represents the apex of the ravenous and exploitative free-market system; capitalism in its purist and most developed form, which promises the absolute subjection of the global proletariat, and ultimately the destruction of the world through an exponential growth in ecologically devastating practices. In short, the debate on globalization is characterized by a stark polarization: natural and inevitable progress vs. political construct; dialogue between various nations and cultures vs. western-dominated monologue; increased freedom for all vs. ensuring the unimpeded mobility of capital; and, in its most extreme rhetoric, good vs. evil.

However, one point of consensus within the debate seems to be that globalization is a comprehensive process. It is not restricted to one realm of social relations. Globalization cannot be defined as a specifically economic process just as it cannot be considered a peculiarly cultural one. Instead, globalization should be understood in a holistic sense, a " . . . widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual" (Held *et al* 2).

This then, is a good point of departure towards the development of a working definition of the concept, which will constitute an integral part of this thesis. However, it by no means satisfies one's understanding. Indeed, the process of globalization is marked by the compression of space and time through the creation of an ever-tightening international/cultural interconnectedness, integrating even the most

remote and isolated geographical locales into a universal system. But what is the nature of this system? Who or what drives it? Whose interests does the perpetuation of globalization serve? What are its ideological and theoretical underpinnings? These are the questions that one must answer to truly understand such a monolithic and complex phenomenon as globalization. In this project, I aim to prove that while globalization includes social, cultural, and economic dimensions, these dimensions are all capitalist in character. That is to say, the culture, and social and economic relations being globalized are those of Western capitalism. As such, globalization is simply another ideologically-deceptive name for the spread of contemporary capitalism on a truly global scale. Thus, to comprehend globalization one must first revisit the thought of Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin.

Marx and Lenin

As Marx illustrated over a century ago, by its very nature, capitalism needs to constantly expand. "Expansion," in this context, is equivalent to increased rates of profit. The inexhaustible search for profit growth is the fundamental driving imperative of capitalism. During the formative years of capitalist production in an individual country, this imperative is realized primarily through increasing efficiency in production, by implementing such strategies as maximizing worker productivity at the lowest possible cost (wages), centralizing production in large-scale operations (factories), integrating labour-saving mechanization at the site of production (e.g., the conveyor belt), and lobbying the state for business-friendly labour and tax laws. As the capitalist system progresses and matures, the operations of individual capitalists grow into ever-larger operations and competition becomes increasingly fierce, as some competitors struggle financially to stay alive and others to dominate their market shares. As partially mechanized, mass production replaces less-efficient, purely human labour, capitalists create products at ever-decreasing costs, enabling a corresponding drop in retail prices for the consumer. Indeed, this resultant drop is the primary manoeuvre through which competing capitalists attempt to out duel their opponents, or as Marx claims, " . . . the battle of competition is fought by the

cheapening of commodities" (Capital 686). This is Marx's theory of the "centralization of capitals," where eventually, the larger, more efficient producers, either integrate smaller ones through mergers, or simply compete them out of existence. What is left is a handful of massive corporations, which have effectively monopolized production for the various market-sectors of various goods and service-types.

However, at this point an inherent contradiction of capitalism begins to appear. At the national level, capital has developed to the point of market saturation, every geographical and demographical nook and cranny has been penetrated, and the means of production have reached a point of maximum efficiency, whereby no new forms of mechanization, or innovation that would facilitate increased productive efficiency seem imminent. As a result, commodity retail prices hit their basement level. To go any lower would necessitate a reduced rate of return on investment. Lower wages would act as the proverbial "last straw" on the proletariat's back. In short, increased rates of profit become impossible. What then, occurs at this point? The answer is simple: capitalism expands abroad in the form of imperialism. As Marx asserts, at the time of his writing, in the industrialized countries of Europe " . . . the process of primitive accumulation is more or less accomplished" (Capital 838). However this was not the case in the colonies of North America and Australasia, where the newly arrived settlers set up modes of production (e.g., livestock ranching) whereby they own their own labour and receive full value for exercising it. There is some exploited labour in the form of hired hands, however land is so abundant and cheap it does not take long for these workers to reach the status of their employers (Marx, Capital 838).

Whereas Marx's critique of colonization in Capital focuses primarily on the mode of production established by the newly arrived settlers in North America and Australasia, it is Lenin who best articulates the notion of imperialism-as-capitalism in Imperialism. Beginning with Marx's theory of the centralization of capitals, Lenin asserts that imperialism simply represents the natural progression of, and transition to,

a higher form of capitalism. [2] As a result of the unprecedented accumulation of surplus capital in the hands of a few monopolizing capitalists, the most effective strategy to expand operations and enjoy further profit-returns, is to extend beyond national borders. However, while the export of goods had existed long prior to the monopoly stage of capitalism, "[i]n the old type of capitalism, that of free competition, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature. In the modern kind, the capitalism of monopolies, the export of *capital* becomes the typical feature" (Lenin 47). Thus, the growing importance of finance-capital is introduced and emphasized, a concept that is very much a salient feature of contemporary global economic relations.

Having highlighted this point, Lenin goes on to assert a direct correlation between the level of industrialization and colonial ambition. Those capitalist countries most developed begin the process of seeking and conquering new geographical regions for purposes of investment (financial) and extraction (raw materials). Thus, as Britain and France were the forerunners of capitalist production, i.e., the first fully industrialized countries, they correspondingly enjoyed the greatest 19th-century colonial expansion. Indeed, Britain was considered the "workshop of the world," importing primary resources and in turn, exporting them back into the world-market in the form of manufactured commodities. However, this hegemonic status did not last long, as other world powers (America, Germany, Japan) developed their own industrial capacities and challenged Anglo-Franco dominance. As these nations entered the ranks of the fully developed, they too sought areas to conquer and channel surplus capital investment. The nature of colonial competition was such that no section of the world could be left unoccupied. Individual capitalist-operations become so large that the only way to enjoy further growth, and indeed survive, was to devour and claim ownership to, as much of the globe as possible:

> The capitalists divide up the world, not because of original sin, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to take this road in order to get profits . .

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[2] Indeed Lenin stresses the significance of this observation (theory of centralization of capitals): "This transformation of competition into monopoly is one of the most important – if not the most important – phenomena of modern capitalist economy . . . " (6).

> .The latest period of capitalism shows us that definite relations are being established amongst capitalist groups, relations *based* on the economic partition of the world . . . (Lenin 59).

And indeed, as a result of this imperial competition, Lenin announces that for the first time, the entire world has been subjugated to the colonial rule of a handful of powerful capitalist nations.[3]

Transnational Elite Networks

In his article, "The Second Glorious Revolution: Globalizing Elites and Historical Change," Kees Van der Pijl articulates an alternative but similar theory of capitalist expansion to that of Lenin. He claims that the world is nearing the end of a process that began in 1688 with the "Glorious (Industrial) Revolution" in England. At this time, Van der Pijl contends that British barriers to free enterprise were lifted, resulting in the creation of the first "Lockeian" state/society complex. By Lockeian, he is referring to a society characterized by an " . . . aristocratic/bourgeois self-government and a market economy regulated by common law" (Van der Pijl 103).[4] In the 18th and 19th centuries, interacting with the growth of the capitalist mode of production, the English Lockeian state/society complex spread across the world by means of massive English colonization in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This marked the genesis of what Van der Pijl calls the "Lockeian Heartland." The period between 1688 and the present is interpreted as a process whereby the Lockeian Heartland gradually expanded; a successful process, but one that by no means went unchallenged. Van der Pijl characterizes the progression as one marked by successive confrontations with what he labels "Hobbesian contenders." By "Hobbesian," Van der Pijl is referring to a " . . . tentacular, self perpetuating state closely monitoring civil society . . . [where] local interests . . . [are] subsumed under the state, executive privilege overwhelms the rule of law" (103). Thus the expansion of the Lockeian heartland was marked by a pattern of: confrontation between the two

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[3] Here Lenin tends slightly to hyperbole, as there do exist some significantly large and independent countries at this time, i.e., Russia and China. However, both these nations were heavily invested in by various colonial powers.

[4] In short, a Lockeian state/society complex refers to a liberal-democratic system of governance.

state/society types, a resulting defeat of the Hobbesian contenders, and consequent integration of these contenders into the Lockeian heartland (Van der Pijl 112).[5] With the collapse and absorption of the Soviet Bloc, the Lockeian Heartland's process of integration was complete. Thus, a truly global liberal-democratic order has been established with no serious Hobbesian contenders.

The process of English colonization referred to earlier, coincided with what Van der Pijl calls the formation of "transnational elite networks" (TENs). Perhaps the oldest example of a TEN is the *Freemasons*, which was originally composed of " . . . the type of people most anxious to preserve and to increase the steadily growing influence in society and government of men of quite moderate wealth and standing" (Van der Pijl 105).[6] In other words, these networks were formed to ensure that laissez faire economic practices were embraced and instituted wherever their capital expanded.

Moving into more contemporary times, characterized by international tendencies towards the complementary ideologies of neoliberalism and globalization, one can see the development of more sophisticated TENs, which act to encourage the practical institution of these ideologies.[7] Van der Pijl cites two strategic methods these modern networks have employed to project transnational business interests:

> 1) the preparation and propagation of an economic programme to displace Keynesian/Fordist corporate liberalism in the West . . . [which has] served to undermine the productive cohesion of the Hobbesian states; and 2) the actual strategy of confrontation with socialist states, parties, and movements (123).

It is worth noting that this latter strategy has included direct military intervention in the form of covert operations. A well know example of this is the American support of the *Contras* in Nicaragua, which involved the director of the *Heritage Foundation* backed by the CIA (Van der Pijl 124).

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[5] He breaks this process down into four periods: 1) 1688-1789, where England and New England constitute the Lockeian heartland and France is the paramount Hobbesian contender; 2) 1789-1870, Britain, the self-governing colonies, and America vs. France, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary; 3) 1870-1945, America, the British Commonwealth, and France vs. Germany, Japan, Italy, and Russia/U.S.S.R.; and 4) 1945-1988, North Atlantic bloc, West Germany, France, Australia/New Zealand, and Japan vs. the Soviet Bloc, China, India, Mexico, Brazil, Iran . . . (Van der Pijl 105).

[6] Other TENs cited by Van der Pijl include: the *Round Table* groups, the various *Rhodes* networks, the *British Royal Institute of International Affairs*, and the *U.S. Council of Foreign Relations* (106).

Although Van der Pijl's analysis focuses primarily on the global spread of liberal-democracy, the important concept to note, in the context of this thesis, is his description of TENs. The establishment of these influential capitalist-networks, whose sole purposes were, and are, to promote and ensure the implementation of political structures that facilitate and secure the free flow of international capital, once again indicates an intimate relation between, if not an equivocation of, the forces of capitalism and globalization.

Dependency and World Systems

Marx and Lenin's intellectual theories of capitalist expansion have paved the way for a long and rich lineage. Indeed, many contemporary critics of globalization have been directly and profoundly influenced, and are indebted to their legacy. Such a school of thought, "Dependency Theory," emerged in the 1950s.[8] Represented by such names as Prebisch, Amin, Frank, and Cardoso, Dependency Theory illustrated the unequal nature of trade relations between the rich industrialized countries of the "First World," and the poor, primarily raw-material exporting nations of the "Third World."[9] It argued that although *de jure* independence had been achieved by the former European colonies, a *de facto* dependence still existed. That is, the colonial structure, whereby the colonies and their populations were used for valuable raw-material extraction and export back to their European mother countries, was still very much intact. While the market value of primary resources tends to decline over time, the value of manufactured products (which these raw-materials were ultimately turned into in the factories of Europe) tend to increase (Roberts and Hite 11). Without sufficient economic and material resources and modern infrastructures, the formerly colonized countries found themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of

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[7] These include: the *Mont Pelerin Society*, the *Trilateral Commission*, the *Heritage Foundation* and the *Committee on the Present Danger* (Van der Pijl 123).

[8] The Dependency School arose as a response and critique to "Modernization Theory" which basically asserted that to develop, nations in the Third World needed to open their borders to First World investment, and through international loans develop a modern (Western) infrastructure.

[9] Dependency Theory's primary focus was the structural relations between the West and South America.

dependency, despite their formal independence. To break this cycle, dependency theorists advocated a direct, radical, and immediate break from all relations with the industrialized nations, and the implementation of socialism.

The early 1970s witnessed the rise of another extremely influential school of thought that critically illustrated the inequality of global economic relations: "World Systems Theory." As an offshoot of Dependency Theory, World Systems attempted to further explain the nature of contemporary international economic relations, and how these relations came to be, by developing a thoroughly comprehensive theoretical framework. It attempted to fill in the theoretical gaps left by Dependency Theory by incorporating in-depth quantitative and historical methods. In particular, some of the main criticisms of Dependency Theory were: 1) the lack of an explanation for why some peripheral countries were able to move up in the system and achieve core status (e.g., Japan and Taiwan); 2) the assertion that direct radical breaks from the core would actually lend to quicker development; and 3) too much emphasis on external causes and not enough focus on the actions of domestic capitalist classes as a possible source of development problems (Shannon 19). In response, World Systems Theory broke away from the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis in relation to understanding development, instead opting for the categories of "core," "periphery," and "semi-periphery." World Systems Theory forms the basis of the framework in which my impending analysis of Khomeinist Iran will be set. Further, as a body of theory, it anticipates the contemporary globalized economy, and forms an integral theoretical linkage between post-war and present-day critical scholarship.

Commonly recognized as the founder of World Systems is Immanuel Wallerstein. His academic trilogy has become in many ways the archetypal text for world systems theorists.[10] Through studying the long historical evolution of capitalism he asserts that a hierarchical world order has developed, where the various member nation-states are positioned in one of the three aforementioned constituent structural zones: the core, periphery, and semi-periphery. He rejects (as did dependency theorists) the notion that all societies progress naturally and logically

[10] Wallerstein's work to which I refer here is The Modern World System. NY: Academic Press, 1974.

through distinct modernizing stages. This sort of reasoning he claims, leads to the erroneous notion that underdeveloped nation-states are simply in one of the earlier stages of a universal development process.[11] Instead, he argues that every country occupies a structural-functional position in a world capitalist system, or more specifically, a position in a global division of labour. Thus, in much the same way as Marxism rejects the liberal notion of individual agency, Wallerstein rejects the nation-state as the proper unit of analysis in international relations. Instead, "only the totalities that exist or have historically existed are minisystems and world systems, and in the 19th and 20th centuries there has been only one world-system in existence, the capitalist world-economy" (Wallerstein 192).[12]

By taking a broad definition of capitalism, "production for profit in the market," Wallerstein breaks from traditional Marxist notions and shows that capitalism has existed since the 16th century.[13] At this time, the different regions of the world began to be slotted, by the dominant powers, into their structural positions within the global division of labour. The mode of recruitment and payment of labour, be it wages, tenancy, coerced-cash crop production, or slavery, differed among the various regions depending on which variety was most appropriate to the specific geo-cultural circumstances (Wallerstein 198). He argues that "by a series of accidents," the world capitalist system developed in such a way that: North-Western Europe emerged as the core of the system (focussing on highly-skilled agricultural production), Eastern Europe and the Western hemisphere represented the periphery (primary resource providers), and Mediterranean Europe formed the semi-periphery (high-cost industrial production, e.g., silk) (Wallerstein 199).

Corresponding with these production foci, the different regions developed state mechanisms of varying strengths, strongest in the core and weakest in the periphery. While the state is not the primary unit of analysis, it still plays a

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[11] For example, as a rejection of Eurocentric analysis, Andre Gunder Frank asserts, "our ignorance of the underdeveloped countries' history leads us to assume that their past and indeed their present resembles earlier stages of the history of the now developed countries" (160).

[12] The category of mini-system refers to a society that has been completely isolated from contact with any other. No mini-systems exist anymore in the contemporary world. Wallerstein defines a world-system as "a unit with a single division of labour and multiple cultural forms" (192).

[13] However it was not until the 18th century that the predominant form of surplus extraction became industrial. Before this, the primary variety was agricultural.

significant role in the maintenance and perpetuation of the world system. In classic Marxist terminology, the state represents the political superstructure that facilitates the economic base. As such, the state acts to: 1) regulate the relationship between the working and capitalist classes (usually in favour of capital); 2) shape international relations in the interest of the capitalist class; and 3) in terms of the cores states, incorporate countries into the periphery (Shannon 19).

By instituting strong economic barriers on trade, core nations were able to protect their economic interests and hinder the potential for peripheral development. However, consistent with Marx's theory of capital expansion, these protective measures eventually proved an impediment to further economic growth, and the core-capitalist class began to demand the lowering of trade barriers. However, loyal to his rejection of the individual nation as the unit of analysis, Wallerstein argues:

> . . . this is not an 'internationalization' of 'national' capital. This is simply a new political demand by certain sections of the capitalist classes who have at all points in time sought to maximize their profits within the real economic market, that of the world-economy (199).

In relation to the semi-periphery, Wallerstein claims that it is an essential component to the smooth functioning of the world system. The semi-periphery's role is less economic than political. I would argue that in the same way that a large middle-class is essential to the smooth functioning of a capitalist society, a semi-peripheral zone is essential in preventing any profound polarization of rich and poor regions, or as Wallerstein asserts: "The existence of the third category means precisely that the upper stratum is not faced with the *unified* opposition of all the others because the *middle* stratum is both exploited and exploiter" (201).

Wallerstein analyses the historical stages through which the capitalist world system evolved. This paper will not examine these in detail except for the stage contemporary to his work in the 1970s, i.e., the Cold War era, or "industrial capitalism." Industrial capitalism began in Britain in the 19th century. A major ramification of this economic and social transition was the development of a large

urban proletariat, and a corresponding "anti-capitalist mass spirit" which developed into "concrete organisational forms" (Wallerstein 204).[14]

According to Wallerstein, the First World War marks the conclusion of capitalism's third stage and the Russian Revolution represents the beginning of the fourth. At this time, Russia constituted a position in the semi-periphery and was gradually receding into the periphery. Thus, the Bolshevik Revolution is seen not as an attempt to establish a new socialist world system but simply a strategy employed by a semi-peripheral nation to consolidate its economic status and potentially move up (Wallerstein 205). He concludes that the emergence of socialist nations actually *consolidated* the capitalist world system in that it concretized a semi-peripheral zone of which a significant number of members were in danger of degenerating into the periphery.

Central to my argument is Wallerstein's observation that the contemporary world system is essentially a product of the global expansion of capitalism. Every country, as a representative of one of the three structural constituents, plays an essential role in the maintenance of the system as a whole. However, each individual member is not necessarily satisfied with its structural position or function. As a result, all states outside the core, aspire to upward mobility. This is an extremely important consideration for contemporary analysis in that global capitalism is still characterized by a global division of labour, and states still compete fiercely to increase their standing therein. Further, it suggests that the Communist movement of the 20th century was never a serious threat to the capitalist system, or more specifically, did not represent a force genuinely opposed to capitalism. While in theory, an international socialist movement could pose a threat to the hegemony of global capitalism based on a rejection of class and national divisions, state capitalism as practiced in the Soviet Union, did not represent such a movement.

Global Systems Theory

[14] Here Wallerstein is referring to trade-unions and socialist parties.

While World Systems Theory provides one with an adequate, if general, framework in which to understand the structure of global capitalism in terms of regional economic relations, and the role of the state in enforcing the interests of the dominant capitalist classes, it fails to address some of the underlying ideological imperatives which ensure the successful reproduction and continued expansion of the system as a whole. Here I am speaking of the global capitalist system's need to create a specific and relatively homogenous global consciousness; a hegemonic "common sense" in the way cultures and individuals perceive and approach their lives. Values and life-style choices must be perpetuated that complement and encourage the creation of new markets and thus allow capitalism to expand *ad infinitum*. Taking a simplistic view of the concept of "market" – a site of consumption and production – it follows that to create "new markets," one must either introduce products to formerly untouched locales, encourage people to buy more things, or create new consumers. Capitalism pursues all three courses of action. The twin ideologies of globalization and neo-liberalism have effectively succeeded in relation to the first option.[15] With the increasing saturation of all possible global markets realized, the second two strategies become that much more important.

Of current scholars who most acknowledge this capitalist imperative, Leslie Sklair perhaps emphasizes it the most and articulates it the best. With a background in the World Systems School, Sklair stresses the importance of transcending international relations analysis beyond the level of the nation-state. As such, he labels his theoretical paradigm "Global Systems Theory," which "is based on the concept of transnational practices, practices that cross state boundaries but do not necessarily originate with state agencies or actors" (Sklair, "Social Movements and Global Capitalism" 344).

Sklair's global system is divided into three different, but complementary spheres of transnational practices: 1) the economic; 2) the political; and 3) the culture-ideological. Economically, the main actors are the transnational corporations (TNCs). TNCs roam the world, seeking new markets to sell their products and services, countries and regions with cheap and poorly organized labour forces, and

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[15] More will be said about neoliberalism later in the section dealing with global consumer culture.

low tax walls to foreign investment, in which to produce their goods. The TNCs are powerful global economic actors as their profits are enormous and for many governments of undeveloped countries, seen as crucial partners in actualizing their aspirations towards development.[16] The global political sphere is represented by a "transnational capitalist class" (TCC), which includes: 1) TNC executives and their local affiliates; 2) globalizing state bureaucrats; 3) capitalist-inspired politicians and professionals; and 4) consumerist elites (merchants, media) (Sklair, Sociology of the Global System 174). Similar to Van der Pijl's TENs, members of the TCC act in concordance to further the interests of the global system in its entirety through the promotion of laissez-faire economics, and the restructuring of domestic economies and foreign policies, to facilitate greater capital mobility and to expand and attract foreign investment. Overall, one can understand the transnational practices operating in the economic sphere as producing the commodities to be consumed in the global marketplace and the means to produce said commodities, while the transnational practices operating in the political sphere, produce the political environment in which all this can occur (Sklair, Sociology of the Global System 53).

The third sphere of the global system, the culture-ideological, is represented by the culture-ideology of consumerism, which Sklair defines as " . . . [a] coherent set of practices, attitudes and values, based on advertising and the mass media but permeating the whole social structure, that encourages ever-expanding consumption of consumer goods and services" ("Development in Global Perspective" 177). Whereas all three spheres of behaviour work interdependently toward the same goal – the promotion and expansion of the global capitalist system – there is one profound analytical distinction between the first two spheres and the third. In the context of the economic and political realms, the global system has no need for the active inclusion of the global masses. Indeed, the bulk of humanity is effectively excluded from any empowered position in these processes. In short, it is a small and exclusive group of elites (the TCC) that steer global economic and political processes. However, the

[16] In classical Marxist terms, TNCs represent both the centralization of capitals and exploitation of labour through surplus values extraction. Of course, exploitation of labour is a fundamental facet of capitalism, and indeed capitalism is defined by it. However, it will not be my focus in this paper. I

global system encourages, demands, and indeed relies on the committed participation of the vast majority of global citizens in the sphere of culture-ideology, as Sklair notes:

> . . . the aim of global capitalists is total inclusion of all classes, and especially the subordinate classes insofar as the bourgeoisie can be considered already included. The cultural-ideological project of global capitalism is to persuade people to consume above their 'biological needs' in order to perpetuate the accumulation of capitalism for private profit . . . ("Social Movements and Global Capitalism" 345).

Although, the economic and political spheres are integral factors in the reproduction and proliferation of global capitalism, in many ways the ideology of consumerism is its lifeblood. As Gramsci asserts, to ensure a stable political system, the ruling elite cannot rely solely on control over the political apparatus (the courts, police, military, etc.), or as Althusser describes it, the "repressive state apparatus" (136). There is another, more abstract, social realm that the dominant class must control for a stable socio-political hegemony to be maintained, that of the ideological, or "private," sphere of society.[17] As Althusser succinctly puts it: "No class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising hegemony over and in the State *Ideological*[18] Apparatus" (Althusser 136).

While Gramsci and Althusser's focus is on the state, taken to a global, more contemporary level of analysis, this idea is just as salient. Without the mass dissemination of consumer culture as the dominant mode of social behaviour, the hegemony of globalization is seriously challenged. Indeed, this is Sklair's conclusion as well: "Any attack on capitalist consumerism is an attack on the very centre of global capitalism" ("Social Movements and Global Capitalism" 349).

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make this qualification so as to ward off any reader who may assert I have overemphasized the importance of consumerism when compared to surplus value extraction.

[17] Gramsci's concept of the State is perhaps his most important contribution to the Marxist school, represented in his famous equation, "the State = political society + civil society" (263). Here "political society" refers specifically to government and its related organs such as the courts, police, and military, i.e., any institution that plays a directly repressive role in the interests of the dominant class. "Civil society" refers to what is commonly understood as the "private sphere" of social activity, e.g., the media, religion, the education system, etc. (261). When a dominant class holds power over both spheres of activity, a hegemonic structure has been established. I will be referring to this concept throughout this paper, as consumerism represents such a hegemony.

[18] Italics mine.

Chapter 3: Consumerism

*On her many journeys through the world, Fermina Daza had bought every object that attracted her attention because of its novelty. . . . For that is why they had been bought: so that others could see them (*Gabriela Garcia Marquez, Love in the Time of Cholera 300).

To create the cultural values necessary to material consumption is McWorld's first operating imperative (Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld 109).

You can buy these things but you don't need them, but as long as you're comfortable it feels like freedom (Billy Bragg).

All Signs: Shop 'til you drop! (excerpt from the horoscope in The Edmonton Journal, March 20, 2001).

Before I go any further with this discussion of the global ideology of consumerism, it seems appropriate and indeed necessary to postpone this course temporarily, step back, and set aside some time and space to reflect upon the concept of consumerism itself. All living entities need to "consume" in order to survive. This is a biological imperative and the basis on which many critics attack anti-consumerist arguments: "consumerism is natural, and to impede its free exercise is to impede natural human instincts" they claim. Indeed this is a compelling argument and one not easily countered. However, while the act of consuming at a level to ensure survival is certainly a fundamental human drive, the "need" to consume beyond this level is debateable. Drawing on lessons from Gramsci, all ideas that seem "natural" or "common sense," may not be so.[19] And further, what one day may seem natural and just, may the next be perceived as inhumane and barbaric.[20] Thus, consumerism is no less open to deconstruction than any other realm of human behaviour, and indeed some interesting ideas emerge when it is subject to critical analysis.

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[19] When the ideas and interests of a dominant class have been absorbed and accepted by the majority of people in society, i.e., when they become "common sense," ideological hegemony has been established. As mentioned in chapter two, this hegemony is primarily articulated by, and transferred to the populace through the institutions of "civil society" (the media, religion, the education system, etc.) (Gramsci 263).

[20] For example: slavery, colonialism, monarchy, honour killing, and (hopefully one day) eating animals, are all practices that at one time were perceived as perfectly legitimate forms of behaviour but are now widely condemned.

Sklair has already defined consumerism at its shallowest and most basic level, as "consumption above biological needs." This definition is much too simple for any serious critique to stand on.[21] The concept of "biological needs" is an ambiguous one at best, and the still more elementary category of "need" is even more vague. Are all individuals' needs identical? Is the suburbanite's purchase of a car to traverse the 1½-hour commute to work, the actuation of a vital need? Is buying a salted cracker more consumerist then buying a plain one? Questions such as these are doomed to the eternal pit of the purely abstract, a place I am not interested in spending time (let alone have a debate in!). Thus the answer to the question of consumerism will not be found in the realm of philosophy, but in the domain of socio-political economy.

Consumerism is more than the act of consuming. It is better conceptualized as a lifestyle, an ideology that cannot be understood divorced from the socio-political forces and cultural institutions that promote and sustain it. While to consume is a natural imperative, consumerism is an ideological construct. As Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen show, the etymology of the term is French: " . . . an act of pillage . . . it meant to 'take up completely, devour, waste, spend'" (51); a fitting definition that seems to anticipate the guiding principles of contemporary capitalism, and epitomizes the fundamental imperatives of consumer culture.

So with this in mind, understanding consumerism as somewhat detached from the act of consuming itself, one must reorient one's focus, and conceptualize the concept more so by the nature of the motivation to consume. As such, Russell Belk provides an adequate description of consumer culture, that will serve as a working

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[21] Perhaps the best attempt to quantify the concept of "need" was in the mid-1970s which witnessed the emergence of a new approach in development theory called "Basic Needs Theory." The International Labour Organisation, an organ of the United Nations, first developed this approach. Basic Needs was of significance in that, while it did not question the desirability of modernization as an end, it did recognise that "growth apparently did not lead to substantial expansion of employment opportunities and increased incomes for the poor" (Martinussen 298). While various emphases and orientations abound within the framework of the basic needs approach, John Martinussen describes three generally agreed upon "basic needs" which all people, rich or poor, require to lead at the least, a minimally satisfying life. These include: "First . . . food, shelter, clothes, and other necessities of daily life; secondly, access to public services such as drinking water, sanitation, health and education; thirdly access to participate in, and exert influence on, decision making both in the local community and in national politics" (299).

definition for this thesis: " . . . consumer culture is defined as a culture in which the majority of consumers avidly desire (and some noticeable portion pursue, acquire, and display) goods and services that are valued for nonutilitarian reasons, such as status seeking, envy provocation, and novelty seeking" (105). Added to Belk's list of motivational defining features of consumer culture should be "feelings of inadequacy," that is, consumerist societies are characterized by a constant dissatisfaction amongst their citizens in terms of what they own. This is primarily transmitted through advertising as Dave Collis asserts, " . . . the framework of meaning provided by advertising is abusive; it tells the myth that the consumer is intrinsically inadequate, always needing to adopt a posture of searching for salvation from their inadequacy, a salvation which only the consumption of the product can provide" (www.zadok.org).

The Shopping Infrastructure

While Britain may have led the way in terms of capitalist development, it was within the fledgling nation of America that the seed of consumerism germinated and flourished, spreading at the rate of genetically modified ivy. Perhaps the most appropriate analytical starting point for the development of American consumer culture is the birth of the "general store." Not only does the general store represent a site of consumption where a variety of necessities could be purchased under one roof, more importantly, it marks the transition point from the use of primarily home-made goods to that of primarily pre-packaged, store-bought goods. Perhaps it is best conceived as a transition from a time when individual households were virtually self-sufficient to a period whereby households became general store-dependent.

The appeal of the general store to hard working rural Americans can be summed up in one word: convenience. As George Ritzer claims, the modern individual's search for efficiency in her daily routines is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary "McDonaldized" (rationalized) society (9).[22]

[22] Ritzer perceives the process of McDonaldization as the unfolding of Weber's theory of societal development, characterized by a steady rationalization of behaviour in all sectors of society. A

Contemporary consumers are constantly looking for ways to cut down the amount of time they spend on menial (but necessary) tasks, as so much of their waking lives are spent at work. It was no different for the labourers in rural America, as the general store provided a much appreciated and timesaving service.

As the general store gradually replaced home commodity production, the underlying principles that made it so successful began to manifest themselves in even more convenient forms. Of course, in the cities the general store soon evolved into the "department store," which allowed urban consumers an even greater variety of products to choose from and at increasingly lower prices. However, as a large portion of the nation was still situated in the countryside, large-scale producers were not exploiting their full market potential. Another strategy had to be constructed to reach out to the rural demographic. Thus, the late 19th century witnessed the rise of "mail-order merchandising," which

> . . . was a 'natural' outcome of mass production, with a particular appeal to people who held on tenaciously to a pre-industrial way of life . . . Among these people, mail-order companies helped mold a large-scale consumer market where none had previously existed (Ewen and Ewen 63).

Not only did mail-order merchandising offer the convenience of home shopping to relatively isolated rural communities, it also allowed the denizens of these communities the ability to purchase much the same products as their urban counterparts. In this sense, mail-order consumption acted as a social equalizer of sorts between town and farm, and town and city, but it also suggests a point where the ability to consume became equivocated with prestige and social status on a much wider scale.[23]

In more contemporary times, shopping has become even more sophisticated and convenient. Department stores have evolved into massive shopping malls and migrated to the suburbs for easier middle-class access. Credit and debit cards allow for buying even when the consumer has no cash or savings respectively. The effort

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McDonaldized society consists of four "appealing" dimensions: 1) efficiency; 2) consumption is easily quantified and calculated; 3) predictability; and 4) controlled (9).

[23] Of course, the connection between social prestige and the ability to acquire and display luxury goods has existed for centuries in cultures all around the world. However, with the advent of mass

exerted to turn the pages of a mail-order catalogue has been eliminated by home-shopping networks. Finally, the Internet transports the consumer to a whole new "virtual shopping universe," taking "impulse" buying to a new level.

Further, consumerism is heavily driven by the concept of "obsoletism." Essentially, this refers to a marketing strategy that aims to convince the consumer that what she owns is either no longer adequate, or "out of style." Conceived by the advertising industry in the 1930s, obsoletism " . . . sought to erect a visible environment of change on which the profit margins of business would neatly mesh with a nurtured condition of consumer dissatisfaction, perpetual feelings of disorientation and self-doubt" (Ewen 243). As Ewen notes, this concept is represented by two innovative industries in particular: 1) disposable products; and 2) fashion (243).

In the case of the former, sustained consumption is ensured by the development of products that are simply thrown away after use (e.g., cameras, razors, diapers, and even handguns). In the case of the latter, the fashion industry created the concept of the "season," whereby clothes worn last season are no longer appropriate for the current one, and apparel from the previous year is simply unsuitable this annum. In the context of this project, the notion of obsoletism highlights an interesting characteristic of consumer culture, that is, "waste" has become an integral component thereof. In many ways, "disposability and waste has become the spine of the system" (Ewen 236).

In short, a shopping infrastructure has developed over the past century that has made the ability to consume increasingly convenient and accessible to all stratum of society. I consider this phenomenon as constituting one of the two primary contributing elements to the development and perpetuation of consumer culture.

Advertising

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production techniques, for the lower classes, what was formerly a far off dream became more of a reality (the ability to acquire prestigious goods).

The previous discussion mainly outlines the formative years of American consumer culture and focuses specifically on the growth of the particular institutional structures that made mass consumption easier and more accessible to the American populace. Of course this is an integral starting point of any future consumption-oriented society. However, while the development of an efficient shopping infrastructure is essential, it does not explain why people develop the urge, or "need," to shop with a ferocious and seemingly endless hunger that characterizes contemporary Western society. For this, one must look for other cultural factors that drive consumerism. Once again the answer can be reduced to one simple concept: advertising.

Many scholars have recognised the profound influence that advertising, and the media in general, can have in terms of shaping an individual's psyche. For a few examples: Ewen and Ewen assert: "The image, the commercial, reaches out to sell more than a service or a product" (42). In a similar vein, Sherif Hetata writes:

> Advertisements do not depend on verifiable information or even rational thinking. They depend for their effect on images, colors, smart technical production, associations, and hidden drives. For them, attracting the opposite sex or social success or professional achievement and promotions or happiness do not depend on truthfulness or hard work or character, but rather on seduction, having a powerful car, buying things or people (279).

Likewise Naomi Klein asserts that advertisers do not just approach their trade as a science but a "spiritual" medium whereby " . . . corporations . . . themselves embody a meaning of their own" (617).

All the above statements make one thing clear: advertising is not about selling a product, it is about selling an idea; a lifestyle that becomes inexplicably linked to the ownership of that product. "Nike" is the symbolic (and literal) representation of victory; the highest level of achievement and human potential. "McDonalds" represents an American cultural icon; its "golden arches" symbolizing all that is good in America (Ritzer 4). The actual product takes second-place to the image associated with it and the image is what the consumer aspires to.[24] In the mind of the consumer, the product becomes the vehicle through which her aspirations are realized.

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[24] I am reminded of an amusing headline in the satirical online newspaper *The Onion*: "Nike to Cease Manufacturing Products – 'From Now on We'll Focus on Just Making Ads'" (www.theonion.com).

Thus, selling a product is intimately tied to creating a marketable image, or aura that surrounds and obscures the mundane functional reality of the product. This fundamental premise of marketing is embodied in the corporate "logo," the visual manifestation of the product. The logo, or brand name, is the mechanism by which one product is differentiated from another, virtually identical one. It is through the creation of a successful logo that some corporations flourish at the expense of their logo-deficient competitors. Ewen cites three cardinal rules of logo creations:

1) The image must be able to be *disembodied, separated from its source.*
2) The image must be capable of being *"economically" mass produced.*
3) The image must be able to *become merchandised,* to be promoted and sold (247).

The successful application of these three marketing maxims has been partially responsible for the widespread recognition of such logos as Nike's "swoosh," Kellogg's "Tony the Tiger", and the cornucopia of loveable Disney animals. In all these cases the images transcend the actual article of merchandise and are much more crucial to ensure profits.

However, on its own, a catchy logo does not suffice to ensure sales. While the symbol must be aesthetically appealing, it must also be memorable. By way of illustration, Ewen quotes corporate designer Raymond Loewy: "I'm looking for a high index of visual memory retention. In other words, we want anyone who has seen the logotype, even fleetingly, to never forget it, or at least to forget it 'slowly,' you might say" (247). However, in much the same way that the consumer cannot be trusted on her own to continue consuming, she cannot be relied upon to remember a specific logo. Thus, successful marketing dictates that the consumer must be constantly exposed to the symbol, to reinforce the image, and ensure it becomes etched in her mind. This is the secret of advertising: its power is in its ubiquity. Consumers must be exposed to the image everywhere all the time. Competition has become so fierce that virtually no public space is left "unbranded." Along with more traditional advertising outlets such as TV, newspapers, magazines, and billboards, more contemporary marketing innovations have resulted in the migration of advertisements to the sides of public transportation, professional athletes' uniforms, and public washrooms. Further, no public or private realms of social activity, or

cultural institutions seem immune from some form of brand-name sponsorship. Along with the above mentioned act of "relieving" oneself, other examples include music concerts, education,[25] and even one documented case of a sponsored wedding. With the establishment of the town "Celebration," Florida, an actual living community owned and operated by the Walt Disney corporation, "Disney has reached the ultimate goal of lifestyle branding: for the brand to become life itself" (Klein 155). On a more quantitative level, Klein illustrates the massive scale on which advertising is pursued, by citing a 1998 UNHD report which acknowledged that the growth-rate of global advertising is 1/3 higher than the rate of world economic growth (8). In short, contemporary advertising has completely inundated Western populations with images urging them to consume, and consume they do.

Of course, outside the realm of advertising-proper, the mass media plays an integral role in the promotion and maintenance of consumerism. As Sklair asserts, while the incredible advancements in contemporary media technologies has created an unprecedented capacity for diverse and instantaneous information transfers, the mass media has been used primarily to promote consumption; it has been used to bring about a " . . . reformulation of consumerism that transforms all the public mass media and their contents into opportunities to sell ideas, values, products, in short, a consumerist worldview" (Sociology of the Global System 76).

This includes of course, the mass-entertainment industry, where the line between autonomous cultural expression and marketing is increasingly blurred. At the same time, the power and influence of mass entertainment is growing. For example, the cultural force of the motion picture is well documented, as Benjamin Barber notes:

> . . . for more than anything else this has been the movie century, an epoch in which film and video and the images they mediate have replaced print and books and the word they once brokered as the chief instrumentalities of human communication, persuasion and entertainment (88).

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[25] For example, the education system has experienced the advent of corporate advertising through fast-food sponsorship in the cafeterias of elementary and secondary schools, "Channel One" news, and even in textbooks. In the case of post-secondary schools, corporate sponsorship can be seen in exclusive soft-drink distribution rights, and athletic equipment "donations."

TV programs and Hollywood movies portray images that act to endorse and encourage certain behaviour and ideals. They define for their receptive audience standards of fashion (expensive jewellery, cosmetic adornments, etc.), success (having lots of money and spending it on luxury consumer goods), and beauty (key word: thin). Although for the majority of the population, these ideal characteristics are unattainable, none the less, a significant amount of their earnings are spent on pursuing them. This of course does not even touch on the endless examples of merchandising spin-offs with fast-food chains that generates millions (billions?) of dollars of revenue annually. The increasing partnerships of this nature, where certain brand-name products are intimately associated with, or exclusively featured in, big budget movies or TV programs, has resulted in the further blurring of advertising and entertainment.

Taken together, the creation of a massive, intricate and easily accessible shopping infrastructure, and the ubiquity of advertising and the mass media, has had a profound effect on Western society. Indeed, these two factors constitute the fundamental pillars of consumer culture. Consumption is the way of life, and it is virtually impossible to survive without adhering to its dictates. The ever increasing abundance and diversity of products on the market certainly allows the consumer greater freedom in terms of what to spend her money on, but " . . . the choice is always between which items to buy and consume, never about *whether* to buy and consume anything at all" (Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld 98).

Further, the power of consumer culture to reproduce itself is formidable, if not invincible: "Contemporary society seems to be capable of containing social change – qualitative change which would establish essentially different institutions . . . This containment of social change is perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society" (Marcuse, One Dimensional Man xii). Any implicitly anti-consumerist practices, or explicitly anti-consumerist social movements, are effectively marginalized or incorporated into the system. The rhetoric and fashions of resistance movements eventually become reworked into marketable forms, commodities to be bought and sold. In the process, symbols of resistance lose their original meanings as they are distorted, reversed, and used to promote what they once

opposed. Examples of this phenomenon abound. The anti-war movement of the 1960s evolved into "hippy" fashion. Punk music transformed from an expression of raw, anti-establishment rage, into a multi-million dollar industry where massive corporations like Sony and Columbia records actually sign and promote bands that call for the overthrow of capitalism itself.[26] The environmental movement, rap music, and the animal rights movement,[27] have all undergone this process of commodification. Perhaps the most indicative sign of this development is that one must pay an admission fee to visit Karl Marx's grave in Highgate cemetery.

This brings an end to my discussion of consumer culture. My intent was to illustrate the nature of contemporary Western society, highlighting the way in which capitalism creates a culture whose citizens' ideals, values, and motivations all strongly centre around excessive material consumption, the never ending drive to accumulate more and more things, and how consumerism is at least a partially constructed lifestyle which has come to dominate the collective Western psyche. It is a hegemonic structure, as in a world where everything is a commodity to be bought and sold, it is difficult to imagine a society run by fundamentally different principles. To understand the concept of consumer culture is imperative as it represents the culture-ideological sphere of globalization. The global spread of capitalism relies on the simultaneous proliferation of this ideology to all the populations of the world, a process to which I now turn.

Global Consumer Culture

Although I have already established my assertion that globalization can be perceived as simply the logical extension of capitalist social relations to a global level, I have not yet touched on the necessary global political and economic restructuring that this process demands to ensure success. Globalization does not

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[26] Two prime examples of this are the bands: *Rage Against the Machine* (Sony) whose lyrics rail against corporate dominance and unapologetically support militant indigenous rights movements; and *Chumbawamba* (EMI) who publicly encourages its fans to shoplift its album from corporate music stores. In the realm of Hollywood, the 1998 hit *Fight Club*, whose main theme is overtly anti-consumerist, generated millions of dollars in revenue for its producer.

"just happen." It does not represent a natural and inevitable outcome of social progression as modernization theorists proclaim. In short, it does not signify the "end of history." On the contrary, globalization is an ideological project, gradually and carefully constructed. The forces of globalization act as a self-fulfilling prophecy, on the one hand, disseminating the idea that the process is inevitable, while on the other, creating the conditions to make it so. Any barriers to the successful completion of the project are deliberately and effectively eliminated. Some of these barriers include isolationist economic policies, cumbersome welfare state infrastructures, and cultural practices inconsistent with free enterprise and consumerism. In any event, it is important to understand the assimilative demands placed on non-Western cultures and governments, for one to fully grasp this discussion of Khomeinism as a source of resistance to the unimpeded proliferation of global capitalism.

The philosophical foundation of the hegemonic structure of globalization is liberalism and in particular its neoliberal variant which " . . . celebrates the emergence of a single global market and the principle of global competition as the harbingers of human progress" (Held *et al* 3). It is arguably one of the most potent and fundamental driving forces behind globalization. As a philosophical discourse, it promotes the universal elimination of trade barriers between nations and the absolute deregulation of capital flows and restrictions on foreign investment. Essentially identical to its liberal predecessor, neoliberalism refers to,

> . . . the theoretical and practical rejection of the active state, that had emerged in the Keynesian post-war era, and its replacement by laissez-faire free market doctrines and practices . . . its essential features seem to lie in its determination to reduce the state and to rely increasingly on market mechanisms and individual rather than collective approaches to economic and social problems (McBride and Shields 18).

More than any other factor, the almost unanimous adoption of neoliberal economic policies by the political leaders and decision-makers of the world, has facilitated the spread of global capitalist social relations. These elites view neoliberalism as the most appropriate and effective strategy for economic development and a means to increasing international competitiveness.

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[27] Witness the success of the Body Shop's "Against Animal Testing" campaign for an example of capitalist appropriation of the Animal Right's movement.

This acceptance of neoliberal principles is also reflected in the increased transference of state autonomy to international organizations and indeed these organizations reflect the growing institutionalization of neoliberal doctrines, as Robert Cox notes: "International institutions embody rules which facilitate the expansion of the dominant economic and social forces" (*Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations* 172). The UN is a prime example of this phenomenon. As an institution, it is in many ways, the embodiment of Western liberalism. The UN's official *raison d'être* is to ensure a stable international system by providing a forum where states interact and promote the prevention of war and human rights abuses, based on the doctrine of collective security and intervention. The vast majority of states in the international community are members of the UN and have signed its Charter, and in doing so, implicitly recognized the validity of the organization and its underlying principles as a legitimate authority for the direction of international relations. Thus, the international community has also legitimized the UN mandate of proliferating liberal-democratic ideals throughout the world. This of course is absolutely consistent with neoliberal principles as it encourages the notion of greater interdependence between countries resulting in an environment more open to the adoption of neoliberal trade policies and the creation of new markets for international capital.

Perhaps the most obvious example of an international institution that assists and reproduces the conditions for neoliberal hegemony is the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its structural adjustment programs (SAPs). Joseph Nye, focusing particularly on American interests in the new hegemonic order, articulates this notion well: " . . . the IMF and GATT tend to embody liberal, free-market principles that coincide in large measure with American society and ideology" (63). The primary task of the IMF is "to stabilize exchange rates by providing short-term loans for member states confronted by 'temporary' balance of payments difficulties" (Mingst and Karns 113). However, this aid does not come without conditions attached. In return for loans, states must accept and implement policies recommended by the IMF in the form of SAPs. Invariably SAPs demand the implementation by states of all or some of the following policies: devaluation of currency, reformation of financial

sector, elimination of subsidies (especially for food production), removal of high tariffs and import quotas, reduction of government payroll, privatization of public enterprises, among others (Mingst and Karns 115).

Harsh criticisms of these conditions have been directed at the IMF by several peripheral countries. High interest rates, the content and timing of the imposed conditions, and the neoliberal ideology itself, have all been objects of disapproval by debtor nations. In many countries, these conditions have not led to true economic development but widespread impoverishment, insurmountable debt, and a breakdown of civil society. The only winner in most cases seems to be international capital which takes advantage of these states' liberalized foreign investment policies, low wages, labour and environmental standards.[28] However, in the face of these stark realities, a seemingly paradoxical attitude has formed world-wide, as Karen Mingst and Margaret Karns point out: " . . . despite these criticisms, a consensus has emerged in the 1990s that economic success depends on a country's adoption of an IMF adjustment program" (114). In a Gramscian sense, this illustrates the extent to which a neoliberal ideological hegemony has been established.

So then, what does neoliberalism have to do with consumerism? Well for one, according to its own logic, capitalism needs to constantly enjoy increasing profits. The logic of consumerism dictates that the lower the price of commodities, the more will be consumed. The theory of centralization of capitals illustrates how these two seemingly contradictory imperatives can be realized through mass production and the constant innovation of production methods. Thus, neoliberalism facilitates further productive efficiency, by creating the conditions whereby TNCs can relocate their operations from the relatively costly (in terms of production), core industrialized nations, to countries that, desperate for foreign investment, tend to offer enormous corporate tax-breaks, lax environmental and labour standards, and cheap, *cheap* labour. Consequently, this process of production relocation has allowed corporations the ability to manufacture goods at unprecedented low costs. As the majority of the population in whichever country the factories are situated, at first

[28] Domestic capitalist elites also benefit from these practices but the point is that often the majority of the population does not.

generally cannot afford the very products they produce, most of the finished goods are exported back to the markets of the core. Thus, in this way, core consumers enjoy relatively low prices while TNCs enjoy record profits. Consumerism is bolstered, while capitalism grows. In biology, they call this "symbiosis," while in the social sciences – "the race to the bottom."

However, it is important to not be misled by the previous discussion. Neoliberalism, through its TNC agents, does not aim solely to satisfy the eager consumers of the core. Nor are its corporate proponents satisfied with this demographic as their singular customer base. On the contrary, capitalism, by its very nature, needs to perpetually create, or penetrate new markets, until the world market is saturated. In short, *Western* consumer culture must go *global*. Thus, the question arises, how does globalization achieve this? The answer to this question begins once again with neoliberalism.

Although the vast majority of the populations in peripheral countries do not appear on the surface to enjoy significant purchasing power, these same countries all have, albeit proportionally small, elite capitalist classes (members of Sklair's transnational capitalist class). These classes possess the ability to consume on a Western scale, and thus, represent for foreign capital, the germinal market for the development of consumer culture. This consumer demographic becomes the focus of TNC marketing strategies, as Ruby Roy Dholakia *et al* note, referring to peripheral populations: " . . . the marketing system ignores the majority of them because of their inadequate purchasing power. There exist, however, islands of affluence concentrated in urban areas, which attract the attention of most marketing efforts" (129).

But one must not forget that the culture-ideology of consumerism demands that all classes participate in its global sphere. Neoliberalism, in the form of free trade, floods peripheral nations with Western consumer goods. As Western TNCs boast extensive operating budgets with which to market these goods, and offer relatively low prices, domestic producers and more traditional consumer products cannot compete. This often leads to the extinction of domestic producers. As the elite classes begin to reject traditional products in favour of Western brand-name

goods, the ownership of such items become symbols of wealth and prestige; visible signifiers that clearly differentiate the upper and lower classes. As such, the consumption patterns of the dominant class are transmitted to the lower classes as models of emulation, and lifestyles to aspire to (Dholakia and Firat 93).

Thus, consumerism becomes not only a characteristic of the privileged classes. On the contrary, the poor are infected as well, in some cases even more so than the upper classes, as many become desperate to exude an aura of wealth and distinction. As a result, Russell Belk asserts, " . . . Third World consumers are often attracted to and indulge in aspects of conspicuous consumption before they have secured adequate food, clothing, and shelter" (103).[29] By way of example, studies have shown that despite access to traditional, less expensive, and healthier foods, lower class Mexicans are increasingly developing " . . . a taste for prestigious industrialized goods" (Dholakia *et al* 141). One only has to remember that "McDonalds" just opened its first outlet in the slums of Rio last year. Thus, more and more, TNCs are targeting not only the affluent, but also the poor, as a surprisingly significant market for their wares.

Although it is debated, there is growing evidence that a "standard package" of consumer goods, is becoming a universal category of wants for people the world over. Nathan Keyfitz proposed in 1982 that a world standard package is developing that consists of " . . . a home, automobile, and the means to do some traveling; within the house must be electric lighting, a refrigerator, and a television set" (qtd. in Belk 108). There have been many studies that show consumer wants do indeed differ from culture to culture. However, while the specifics may vary, the goods tend to be all modern and Western. For example, in order of importance, surveys have reported that Tahitians desired a Primus stove, a bicycle, and a radio; whereas Laplanders in Finland rated chain saws, snowmobiles, and telephones as their most coveted items; and finally, Mexican villagers prioritized irons, radios, and beds as their top three (Belk 115).[30] This theory of a global standard package of wants, suggests that at least some degree of cultural homogenization is becoming apparent in even relatively

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[29] This concept is reminiscent of cases where inner city youths in North America have robbed at gunpoint, or, in some cases, even killed other kids, for their brand name clothing.

isolated social groupings. Only the most dogmatic cynic of globalization would criticize members of any traditional society for wanting some of the above mentioned commodities. Indeed, goods such as chain saws and snowmobiles would make life a lot easier for those who live off the land in the cold and desolate tundra of Scandinavia for example. However, with the adoption of foreign technologies, cultures *will* change at least to some degree, and it is likely that after *practical* modern goods have been introduced, modern *cultural* products will not be far behind. A more contemporary and involved study of this phenomenon would be a very interesting and helpful initiative indeed.

But once again, the availability and convenience of Western goods is not the only factor that fuels peripheral consumerism. Barber is right when he claims that " . . . culture has become more potent than armaments" ("Jihad vs. McWorld" 94). Through the proliferation of consumer culture, Western capitalism's expansion to even the remotest regions is greatly facilitated. Indeed, it is a constant and difficult challenge for traditional forms of social behaviour to defend themselves from the bombardment of slick and appealing Western images they face. Gradually, these traditional cultures are overwhelmed and discarded as Western consumer culture " . . . creates a world after its own image" (Marx, Communist Manifesto 23).

The Cultural/Linguistic Dimension of Globalization

The cultural aspect of globalization may be the most visible but it is also perhaps the trickiest to clearly describe due to the difficulty and indeterminacy of understanding exactly how, and to what extent, the intermingling of cultures affect each other. However, it is safe to say that contemporary cultural globalization is a relatively one-sided process. That is, the culture that is being globalized is predominantly Western. So if globalization is marked by the spread of a specific culture, and it is my assertion that it is, then it is Western culture that is expanding, defined by a consumerist ethic. Proving this claim will be the primary focus of the

[30] These numbers were obtained in independent studies, ranging between 1964 and 1987.

rest of this chapter.

As Naomi Klein maintains, the most effective strategy to sell products across international borders is to " . . . force the world to speak your language and absorb *your* culture" (116). Not surprisingly then, English has become in some ways the "international language," or *lingua franca*. A brief glance at the demand for English teachers worldwide reinforces this assertion, and any extended trip around the world lends further support. In this regard, my personal journey through the Middle East (1999) is indicative. Virtually every verbal interaction that other Western tourists and I made with the locals, proprietors of businesses, or with each other, was inevitably held in English. This was so, even though in some cases, I was the only person whose first language was English.[31] Even in fairly remote communities of Turkey and Syria for example, it was possible to get by with basic English terms (and a series of frantic hand gestures).

In the business world, a working knowledge of English is essential to global success. The American consumer market is the most coveted, and for a foreign TNC to significantly penetrate it is indeed a remarkable success.[32] And finally, trends in post-secondary education represent another example of where knowledge of English is an extremely valuable asset. An education at a North American or Western European university is widely perceived as superior to one from Eastern equivalents, and many are willing to spend the exorbitant costs of international student tuition to receive one. Of course, proficiency in the English language is required.

Globalization and the Mass Media/Entertainment Industry

At this point, I think it is most appropriate to briefly examine the nature of the global media industry. The projection of Western images by media conglomerates is perhaps the most acute transmitter of consumer culture. I will begin by illustrating the extent to which this industry is dominated by Western capital, and in particular,

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[31] This included the other hostellers, of whom a large proportion were nationals of non-English speaking countries like Western-continental Europe, East-Asia, Israel, and South Africa.
[32] Of course, the Japanese have been active in the American market for years.

American capital.

Marx's theory of the centralization of capitals is quite evident in the global media industry. Increasingly, the global entertainment/media industry is becoming owned by a handful of massive monopolizing corporations.[33] It has seemingly become a near regular event to pick up a newspaper and be informed of yet another media merger of immense proportions. In the Canadian context, the most recent example that springs to mind is the *CanWest/Global* (Izzy Asper) partial buyout of *Hollinger* (Conrad Black), placing Asper's conglomerate in direct ownership of 13 major Canadian daily newspapers, 136 smaller dailies and weeklies, a 50% share in one of the two national dailies, 85 trade publications, and all of Hollinger and *Southam* internet properties (www.tvforbc.com). When added to CanWest/Global's extensive television enterprise, these new acquisitions made it one of the largest horizontally-integrated corporations in Canada.

This, of course, is not a peculiarly Canadian phenomenon. Table 4.1 illustrates the extent to which the top ten largest international media conglomerates are heavily invested in virtually all major sectors of the mass-media/entertainment industry. While the transnational media corporations are moving to monopolize ownership over the various forms of media, they also aim to control all stages of the production process:

> Not only is the corporate proprietor of a conglomerate likely to own a stable of publishers, one of which will publish a given book, but it can also own the agency that sells the book, the magazine that serializes it, the movie studio that buys and films it, the distributor that purveys it, the cinema chain that screens it, the video export firm that brings it to the global market, and perhaps even the satellite pods or wires through which it is broadcast and the television set and VCR on which it is finally screened . . . (Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld 138)

And so, by virtue of monopolization, the reality of diversity is challenged. This is not to suggest that due to vertical and horizontal integration in the media industry, a wide variety of programming and images will fail to be disseminated, but that with increased concentration regarding control of this process, what gets disseminated increasingly becomes the arbitrary decision of fewer and fewer transnational elites; lots will be shown, but it will conform to the dispositions and interests of those who

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[33] To get a sense of the development, and increasing frequency and size of international media mergers, see Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld 141-143.

broadcast. By definition, transnational elites associate their interests with the promotion of the interests of the global capitalist system, and thus, by extension, the promotion of consumerism. When one considers that these conglomerates tend to be American, or at least, Western-based, the suggestion that a process of media homogenization in terms of cultural images is at work, becomes more salient. Earlier I made the assertion that culturally, globalization has a distinctly American flavour to it. This is no more apparent than in the international motion picture industry, as the numbers in table 4.2 attest.

The global consumer demographic that globalization most covets is the youth market. To instil young people with a consumerist ethic is a profoundly important process as they represent the world's future generations of consumers. Perhaps more than any other media outlet that serves to accomplish this aim, is *Music Television* (MTV). Although an American creation, MTV has spread across the globe and become an integral part of many teens' daily lives. The station is watched in 273.5 million households, in 83 countries. Further, 85% of teens surveyed, watch it every day (Klein 120). While most "MTV countries" operate their own specific national version of the popular show – broadcast in their indigenous language, with home-grown "VJ" hosts – by and large the bands and images offered, are Western in style, if not in site of origin. Essentially, MTV is a glorified, 24-hour advertisement for record companies. But not only does it sell b(r)ands, it also acts as a major transmitter of Western pop culture. Music videos serve to structure the viewers' personal behaviour along consumerist lines.

Taken together, the decreasing impediments to foreign investment and increasing deregulation of national culture industries, with the increasing scale and power of international media/entertainment conglomerates, is indeed globalizing a Western consumerist culture. Very few nations have demonstrated the political will necessary to challenge this process. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, there are some significant social movements at the sub-state level who do indeed represent such a challenge, in particular, various Islamic fundamentalisms.

4.1 First-Tier Media Conglomerates, Business Involvement by Sector, 1997

	Media Turnover (US$bn)	Filmand Video Production	Filmand video Distribution	TV Production	Terrestrial TV	Cable TV	Satellite TV	Digital TV	Recorded Music	Radio	Newspapers and magazines	Book Publishing	Online Publishing
Time-Warner	25	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•
Disney	24	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	•
Bertelsmann	15	n/s	n/s	n/s	•	•	X	•	•	•	•	•	•
Viacom	13	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	X	X	•	•
News Corporation	10	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	X	X	•	•	•
Sony	9	•	•	•	jv	jv	jv	•	•	X	X	X	X
Universal	7	•	•	•	X	jv	jv	X	•	X	X	•	X
TCI	7	X	X	X	X	•	•	•	X	X	X	X	•
Philips Polygram	6	•	X	•	X	X	X	X	•	X	X	X	X
NBC	5	X	X	•	•	•	•	•	X	•	X	X	•

n/s = no significant involvement.
jv = joint venture involvement only.
Source: Held *et al* pg. 348.

4.2 Distribution of Sales of Films by Major Exporting Countries, early 1980s

	Number of countries distributed in	Number of other countries where its sales are main source of films	Number of other countries where its sales are in top 3 sources	Number of other countries where its sales account for at least 5% of imported films
USA	79	56	77	79
France	68	5	36	40
Italy	71	2	39	52
India	42	6	39	52
USSR	55	10	17	28
UK	69	1	19	33
FRG	56	0	8	15
Japan	46	0	5	7
Hong Kong	4	19	28	53

Source: Held *et al* pg. 355.

Chapter 4: Introduction to Section Two

The 20th century witnessed the rise of a host of elites and governments in the Islamic world, intent on modernizing and westernizing their respective state and social structures. *Mustapha Kemal* "Ataturk" in Turkey, *Habibullah* and *Amanullah* in Afghanistan, and *Reza Shah* senior in Iran,[34] are just a few examples. In general, they shared a common goal of discouraging traditional practices that they viewed as backwards and archaic, and sought to introduce modern (usually borrowed from the West) practices and institutions that would serve to integrate their countries and economies into the international community and the emerging global economy. On a cultural level, the discouragement of customs that acted as symbols of traditional culture was widespread. For example, in Turkey, the adornment of the *fez* hat in public was outlawed, and the traditional Islamic female head covering was banned in public institutions. In terms of government structures, Western-style parliaments, the separation of church and state, extensive bureaucratic structures, and modern militaries were adopted and developed pervasively. While Ataturk, undertook perhaps the most comprehensive and successful program of such reforms, the restructurings implemented by Mohammad Reza Shah in Iran were comparable in direction, if more sporadic and less clearly articulated.

Advocates of Westernization have existed in Iran for centuries, dating back at least to the Persian empire of the 1700s. Generally represented and supported by the ruling regime, these Westernizing elements have constituted one side of a fierce dialectical conflict between modernism and traditionalism that has marked the contemporary history of the Iranian state and society.[35] I am not going to examine this entire history in detail, as it is unnecessary in the context of this thesis. Instead, I will simply preface this section by stating that for geo-political considerations and its abundant reserves of natural resources, Iran has always been a strategic site of great power rivalries. More specifically, in the late 19th and early 20th century, Britain and Russia struggled over influence in Iran, while in the Cold War era, the U.S. and the

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[34] Reza Shah senior was the father of Muhammad Reza Shah.
[35] Here, the conservative clergy and primarily rural and religious Iranians represent traditionalism.

Soviet Union were the main actors. As such, Iran has constantly been subject to foreign pressures and influence. It is this observation that Islamists have used to muster anti-Imperialist and anti-Western support among the people.

In August 1953, the nationalist government of *Mohammad Mosaddeq* in Iran was overthrown in a *coup-d'etat* organized jointly by the U.S. and Great Britain. In Mosaddeq's place, Mohammad Reza Shah was reinstalled.[36] His inception marked a watershed in Iranian history as he " . . . showed a growing interest in modernizing Iran's economy and society and in making the country Western in character and militarily strong" (Keddie 143).[37] In the course of this pursuit, the shah loyally subscribed to the modernization school of development that emphasized the need for close ties with the West through loans, direct aid, increased trade, and military cooperation. This the shah pursued with fervour unmatched by most of his fellow pro-Western dictatorial contemporaries. The shah's reforms were many and ambitious. I will not examine every one in detail. Instead I will discuss them where pertinent in the following chapters.

Outline of the Khomeinist State

In order to fully understand the social processes in post-revolutionary Iran it is necessary to first offer a brief introductory summary of Khomeini's thought and vision regarding an alternative Islamic social structure, to establish theoretical context. As such, one must first become familiar with his theory of *Valayat-e-Faqih*, which represents the essence of Khomeini's vision. Valayat-e-Faqih translates to "government by a religious jurisprudent" or "rule of the ulama." As the title suggests, Khomeini believed that the only individuals fit to rule are the *mujtahids,* based on a very simple logic: if society were to be run by Islamic law then it followed that the leaders of such a society should be the most knowledgeable of the law (Islamic

[36] Six days previous to his reinstatement, the shah had fled to Rome when Mosaddeq learned of his involvement in a planned *coup.*

[37] The shah's father, who ruled from 1923 to 1941, also undertook a large-scale and determined program of modernization. His reforms will be mentioned in this thesis where appropriate.

Government 34).[38] The laws of Islam are fixed and eternal, i.e. they do not change with the times. However, the dictates of Islam are many, and often not clearly interpretable. It takes years of committed study and an utter devotion to detail for a Muslim to develop a comprehensive understanding. As such, only a bona fide mujtahid, or Islamic Expert, is qualified to rule in an Islamic society.[39]

Another important aspect of Khomeini's thought is that humans are naturally weak (spiritually) and fallible. This however only seemed to apply to the non-clergy segments of society (or anyone who disagreed with him).[40] Nevertheless, it was from this premise that he justified government intervention in virtually all aspects of social life. He makes clear his opinion on this issue in Islamic Government:

> Considering that the implementation forever of laws after the venerable prophet, may God's prayers be upon him, is one of the essentials of life, then it is necessary for government to exist . . . without this social chaos, corruption and ideological and moral deviation would prevail. This can be prevented through the creation of a just government that runs all aspects of life (21).

Consequently, post-revolutionary Iran was characterized by a structural totalitarianism designed to ensure the observation of Islamic morality and behaviour, and unquestioning obedience to government policy.

Further, as with many contemporary Islamic fundamentalist movements, Khomeini advocated the ahistorical emulation of the social structure of Muhammad's time. Thus, his rhetoric and policies largely emerged from classical Islamic sources. While his ideas may seem idealistic and anachronistic, it is difficult to deny that, at least in the formative years of the revolution, he did indeed make an honest attempt to implement what he promised.[41]

Combining these three above considerations one can form a broad conceptualization of the structure of post-revolutionary Iran. If one wanted to

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[38] Mujtahids are those Islamic functionaries acknowledged as qualified to practice *ijtihad* (interpretation).

[39] This is a specifically Shi'a concept.

[40] It should be noted that no formal or organized clergy exists in Islam as it does in Christianity. Islamic titles like Ayatollah or mujtahid for example, are bestowed on a religious leader purely as a result of having enough Muslims willing to acknowledge the individual as such. But most writers on Islam use the term "clergy" as interchangeable with ulama, and so will I.

generalize, taxonomically Khomeinist Iran might be described as a "totalitarian Islamic theocracy."

In terms of institutions, four main government organs were established to consolidate and further the revolution: 1) the Revolutionary Council (the supreme executive and legislative body); 2) the Revolutionary Guard (designed to enforce the revolution);[42] 3) the Revolutionary Committees (incorporated into virtually every factory, school, hospital etc., to ensure morality is maintained); and 4) the Revolutionary Courts (whose original purpose was to prosecute – and execute – enemies of the revolution) (Daneshvar 133-35). While there is a *de jure* parliament (the *majlis*) and constitution, the Revolutionary Council has executive power to veto any policies proposed by these institutions, rendering them effectively impotent.

Although this overview was brief, it provides a sufficient theoretical and political conceptual framework for the purposes of this paper. But for those not satisfied with my account, I provide the following relatively lengthy citation from Homa Omid that in my opinion, captures the essence of Khomeini's vision of an Islamic state and society:

> Thus, in *Valayat-e-Faqih* Khomeini postulates a future government by a group of like-minded, and high minded, clergy, who submit themselves to Islamic dictum for the population to follow. People, assumed by Khomeini to be deeply devout, simple-minded and intellectually docile, accept the rule of the clergy and follow their instruction to the letter. Religious taxes meet all the state's expenditure and religious courts dish out justice on an immediate and satisfactory basis. There is no need for elections and representative government because the laws are prescribed by Islam . . . People willingly abandon malpractices . . . Women are confined to 'women's affairs' . . . and everyone is happy (62).

Overview of Section Two

The condemnation of such consumerist qualities as greed, envy, excess, and the fetishization of material goods is by no means a characteristic peculiar to Islam. Practically every major religion professes such values. In fact some, like Buddhism for example, are even more emphatic in this area. However contrasting religions

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[41] There are however some blatant exceptions to this claim. For example, Khomeini promised an absolutely free press before the revolution. Of course the media in post-revolutionary Iran was strictly regulated by the state.

grounded in fundamentally different worldviews, like Islam and Buddhism, is as problematic as comparing apples and oranges. A better assessment can be made when one applies the comparative method to the three major monotheist religions. A brief glance at the theoretical bases of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam does not reveal one containing a qualitatively greater level of emphasis on blatantly anti-consumerist themes. So then how do I justify specifically focussing on Islam as an ideology that somehow possesses a potent anti-consumerist message – a message so powerful that it could pose a threat to globalization? There are two factors I consider when addressing this issue. The first, and most important, is that my discussion of Islam is restricted to that of contemporary fundamentalist movements, and more specifically, Khomeini's militant Shi'a variant. Thus, while the Koran and other holy texts inform the modern discourse of radical Islam, it is further and profoundly influenced by, and in large part a product of, anti-Westernism.[43] As consumerism is a fundamental aspect of Western culture, the messages found in Islam that represent aspects of anti-consumerism are amplified and exaggerated by militant ideologues; Islam becomes the antithesis of consumerism. While this can be true of any fundamentalism, the passion and sheer numbers of adherents to radical Islam make it that much more salient and potentially disruptive to the smooth functioning of globalization.

The second characteristic of Islam that I want to focus on is not so much the theological concepts that directly attack consumer culture, but those that discourage it indirectly. That is, certain Islamic dictates when practiced dogmatically challenge the viability of consumerism. Thus, I will examine some anti-consumerist by-products of the ideas and policies of the Islamic Republic.

I have broken down these ideas and policies into three general categories. The first two are analyzed in a three step approach whereby the Koranic and supplemental sources of the ideas are examined,[44] followed by the rhetoric of the ideologues of the

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[42] By 1986, the Revolutionary Guard boasted 350,000 personnel (Daneshvar 133).

[43] That is in terms of Western morality, not science or technology. So whereas Western morals tend to be rejected by Islamic fundamentalists, the fruits of Western technological development are embraced if they can be used in a way to advance Islam.

[44] The other primary sources to which I refer are the *Nahj ul Balagha* and other sections of the Shi'a *Hadith*.

revolution, and ending with a look at how this rhetoric was translated into state policies. The categories to be examined are: 1) the encouragement of ideological and behavioural conformity; and 2) economic rules and guidelines. However, it should be noted that not every Khomeinist concept was directly transformed into policy. In some cases, Islamic values were simply promoted and disseminated through various mediums in an attempt to instil these values in the Iranian populace. In this sense, Khomeini did not simply want to *impose* Shari'a on the people of Iran – he wanted them to *believe* in it.

The third category I will consider is the concept of *taghlid*, or imitation. This is a peculiarly Shi'a concept (in its emphasis) which stresses the authority, and encourages the emulation of revered Islamic figures. As such, this section will look at the description of, and discourse surrounding, the lives and behaviour of an assortment of Islamic "culture heroes." The personalities under scrutiny will be Muhammad, Ali, Husayn, Fatima, and Khomeini himself.

Chapter 5: Resistance

September 11, 2001.

The intensity of globalization is perhaps matched only by the ferocity of its opponents. As globalization is a comprehensive process, it is not surprising that resistance to it is diverse and manifold. Groups and individuals of all political, cultural, and economic stripes and colours, denounce globalization for a prolific list of reasons. What other issue could bring together: environmentalists and loggers, animal rights activists and livestock producers, socialists and neo-nazis, gay rights activists and Christian fundamentalists, in common opposition, as globalization did in the streets of Seattle last year, and more recently in Quebec City and Genoa? For all these groups, globalization represents a threat to traditional values, lifestyles, identities, or quite simply, their jobs. For many, globalization disorients and deconstructs without re-orienting and reconstructing. Whether the resistance is violent or peaceful, organized or spontaneous, isolated or embracing a vast demographic, it is real and exposes contradictions inherent to the globalizing process.

It is beyond the scope of this project to examine all these loci of resistance and, in many cases, beyond my concern. Most of the groups I just referred to are too small and isolated from each other (except when they come together to protest) to really pose a serious threat to globalization. Further, many of them suffer from a parochial tunnel vision when it comes to their specific interest. They attack by-products of the process, the symptoms of the disease if you will, instead of the fundamental cause. As a result, their complaints can be addressed to greater or lesser extents, without fundamentally undermining the system as a whole. For example, human rights activists can demand better working conditions in the sweatshops of lesser-developed countries (LDCs), and eventually genuine improvements might be realized (indeed public awareness campaigns and boycotts have enjoyed some success in this regard). However, the multinationals tend to implement the absolute minimal level of improvements necessary to placate their consumers' guilt and then proceed to further expand their operations and continue to announce record annual profits. The system rolls on, relatively undisturbed, until the next wave of consumer

anxiety materializes (perhaps years in the future) and similar minimal improvements are introduced; the cycle continues. My point here is that as long as a demand for a specific product exists, the producer will look for the most efficient and cost-effective site and method to create it. Sweatshops will *always* exist, in one form or another, in one country or another. To fight capitalism, you have to burn down the "shop," not just wipe away the "sweat."

The same argument can be applied to the plethora of complaints that many activist groups and individuals direct at globalization. Perhaps I am too quick to criticize these voices of dissent. Maybe they are not consciously out to undermine the system in its entirety. But regardless of motive, calling for things like: heavier penalties for excessive carbon emissions, the ability for workers in LDCs to organize, stricter endangered species legislation, subsidies for domestic farmers, or any other such demands, are not serious threats to globalization because for the most part they can all be efficiently incorporated into capitalism.

What sort of movement then, would constitute a threat to the global capitalist system? Theoretically, it must represent a near, if not absolute, rejection of one of the fundamental driving force of globalization: Western-style consumerism. In this sense, the issue must be approached as a struggle to produce and establish a hegemonic anti-consumerist worldview. Perhaps Sklair says it best:

> The control of ideas in the interests of consumerism is almost total. The ideas that are antagonistic to the global capitalist project can be reduced to one cultural counter-hegemonic idea, the rejection of the culture-ideology of consumerism itself. Without consumerism the rationale for continuous capitalist accumulation dissolves (Sociology of the Global System 82).

A quick review of the various groups represented prominently in the various mass protests mentioned above reveals little in the way of genuine advocates of anti-consumerism. To be fair, many of the protestors may in fact embody this ethic in their daily lives, but this has not emerged as a primary focus of their activism, when perhaps it should be emphasized over all other concerns. As such, a search for anti-globalization activism must transcend the realm of Western-style social movements and look for groups that truly challenge the consumerist underpinnings of the Enlightenment paradigm. In this context, no movements standout as clearly, in terms

of scale and militancy, as the various Islamic fundamentalisms that have risen rapidly in the latter part of the 20th century.

Islam and Globalization

I should begin this section with a qualification: this project does not aim to provide explanations for the mass revival of militant Islam. It is largely irrelevant whether it is a result of socio-economic marginalization in the new global order, a reflection of an anti-imperialist or anti-modern ethic, or a reaffirmation of primordialist identities. Instead, I simply acknowledge that Islamic fundamentalism exists, it is a profoundly powerful force, and that it is likely somehow dialectically connected to the spread of global capitalism. In the context of globalization, I want to examine how some forms of Islam (specifically here the Khomeinist variant) can theoretically and practically, pose a serious challenge to the process. In short, my interests lie less in cause than in effect. Although the rhetoric of militant Islamic theorists and revolutionaries will be closely scrutinized, as it represents the ideas that attract and retain popular support, my main focus is on praxis; the actual policies implemented by the Iranian state. Thus, it is not terribly important whether inconsistencies and contradictions are revealed between theory and practice, or whether policies enacted can be proven as genuinely non-Islamic. The question is not whether the Iranian state is Islamic, but whether it is anti-consumerist and therefore a threat to globalization.

Virtually every government, in every contemporary and predominantly Muslim country, faces some form of militant Islamic fundamentalist challenge to its rule. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, Hamas in Palestine,[45] and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, are among the more prominent groups engaged in violent campaigns to overthrow their governments and institute Islamic regimes. In states like India, the Philippines, and Nigeria, where Muslims do not represent the

[45] Although at present, both Hamas and the Arafat camp are seeking an independent Palestinian state, their visions of that state are certainly not identical. If Yasser Arafat or his successor ever succeeds in establishing a secular, liberal-democratic Palestine, they will immediately be confronted by a militant

majority of the population except in particular regions, armed uprisings in search of regional independence are waging. The governments of these affected nations have tended to respond with force that oft-times exceeds the violence and brutality of their Islamic opposition, and while at times these methods have to a certain degree proved effective in containing the revolt (as in Egypt), the fundamentalists are rarely wiped out and continue low-key operations while they reorganize. Perhaps Syria provides the only example where the government has seemingly successfully squashed this sort of resistance.[46]

Although on the surface, it may look like these various groups are identical in that they utilize similar guerrilla tactics, maintain community social support networks through the mosques and outreach programs, and aim for the establishment of societies governed by *Shari'a*,[47] in some cases they differ markedly in both theory and practice and are thus not united and indeed often antagonistic to each other.[48] However, in the context of this thesis, the important linkage to note is their common antagonism towards a perceived Western cultural colonialism, or "westoxification," which they see their governments as promoters and embodiments of.[49]

Historically, Islam has proved perhaps the most tenacious and resistant challenger to Western cultural and political dominance. As Hoogvelt notes: "Compared with all other areas of the world, the world of Islam has had the unique if dubious distinction of having always been regarded by the West as a *cultural*

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and popularly supported Hamas that might just prove a more powerful adversary than even the Israelis were.

[46] However, it took an extremely bold (and merciless) move against the Muslim Brotherhood by the Assad regime to do so. In 1978 the Syrians militarily quarantined the entire city of Hama for 27 days, while the army proceeded to demolish an entire section of the city, killing an estimated 10,000 - 40,000 Syrian citizens. Thus far, the Muslim Brotherhood has not seemed able to reorganize itself in Syria. This however, is an extreme case and it is difficult to imagine any present-day government undertaking a similarly brutal campaign, as it would risk its reputation in the international community and the support of its own people.

[47] Shari'a refers to Islamic law that regulates every aspect of human behaviour and social life.

[48] See Esposito, for more on this subject.

[49] The observation of a creeping cultural westernization and increasing foreign control of Iran's economy, was so widespread (regardless of ideological leaning), that a term, *gharbzadagi*, became incorporated as a standard term in the Farsi language, and is used by anti-colonialist movements the world over including militant Islamic groups. Gharbzadagi is loosely translated to "occidentosis" or "westoxification." The coiner of this phrase – an Iranian Marxist, Jalal al-I Ahmad – describes it as a disease that eats out the core of traditional Eastern cultures, leaving only a hollow shell (27). Although he was secular in orientation, al-I Ahmad was one of the most influential ideologues of the Iranian revolution, and I will refer to his work where relevant in the course of this thesis.

adversary . . . " (188), and, citing G.M. Jansen, " . . . since 1500 scarcely a decade or even half a decade has passed without some Muslim area somewhere fighting against the encroachment by some western power" (qtd. in Hoogvelt, 191). These statements illustrate that the contemporary conflict between the two cultures is nothing new and attests to the strong collective cultural self-identity of Islam.

However, in much the same way that orientalizing Western academics "create" Islam as the "other," Islamic fundamentalists construct the "West" as a belligerent and comprehensive whole, intent on destroying traditional Islamic culture, and creating a secular materialist world. The rhetoric of contemporary Islamic fundamentalist movements is fraught with anti-Western sentiment. Indeed, the West serves as the scapegoat for the myriad of issues confronting Islamic societies today. Whether these accusations are legitimate or invented, they have met a significant and receptive audience in many Muslim countries, creating a massive popular support base for radical militant action. A brief survey of this rhetoric will serve to illustrate this point.

Hasan al Banna (1906-1948)

One can begin a study of contemporary militant Islamic thought with *Hasan al Banna*.[50] Born in 1906, al Banna decried the poor state of affairs in which the Muslim World found itself. While he certainly laid some of the blame for this situation on Western cultural and economic colonialism, he also vehemently criticized the clergy for ignoring the problem. This point is perhaps the most important in terms of understanding al Banna as an analytical starting point for the development of Fundamentalist Islam, as all successful Islamist movements rely on a politicization, if not radicalization, of the clergy.

One of al Banna's fundamental beliefs was that the social ills of Muslim societies were a result of moving away from Islam as the source of social governance

[50] Al Banna founded the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. It began as a legitimate organization active in civil society, but aspired to political power (largely through peaceful activities). The Brotherhood has become increasingly militant over the years since its establishment and is now an illegal organization in Egypt.

and law. For him, there could be no separation between religion and politics because God creates all rules and guidelines for human behaviour and social organization. Thus, he detested Western democracy – where humans make the laws – and called for the overthrow of all non-Islamic regimes. Although he was one of the first Islamists to justify violence in this pursuit, al Banna was more of a pragmatist than some of the ideologues that came after him. He felt it was acceptable for Muslims to suspend some of their ideals if necessary to achieve their end goal of a state run by the dictates of Shari'a. So, for example, if needed, he advocated working within secular institutions (e.g., democratic elections) to attain political power. As such, al Banna is viewed as somewhat of a moderate when considering his theory of praxis (Sidahmed and Ehteshami 10). But if his approach in this regard was moderate, his loathing of Western culture was anything but.

Using a structuralist form of analysis, al Banna examines the long history of European attempts to colonize the Muslim World. Starting with the crusades, where military might predominated, through to the present where "loans" and "financial dealings" have given Europeans the right to

> . . . infiltrate the economy and to flood the countries with their capital, their banks, and their companies; to take over the workings of the economic machinery as they wished; and to monopolize, to the exclusion of the inhabitants, enormous profits and immense wealth . . . (al Banna 28).

Reminiscent of Dependency Theory, al Banna's analysis gives ordinary Muslims a target for their frustrations and discontent. The West becomes a conscious, united whole, intent on Islam's destruction. But perhaps even more important in the context of developing a mass anti-Western consciousness, is the way in which al Banna creates an image of Western society itself; how he constructs the Western "other." He lists four traits that define European civilization as such:

> 1) Apostasy, doubt in God, denial of the soul, obliviousness to reward or punishment in the world to come, and fixation within the limits of material, tangible existence . . . ; 2) Licentiousness, unseemly dedication to pleasures . . . unconditioned freedom for the lower instincts, gratification of the lusts of the belly and genitals . . . ; 3) Individual selfishness, for every man wants the good only for himself; and class selfishness . . . national selfishness . . . ; 4) Usury, granting it legal recognition . . . (al Banna 26).

Although a gross stereotyping, al Banna's message here is clear: the morals and values that define Western culture are those that Islam condemns.

Sayyid Abul a'la Maududi (1903-1979)

Another influential Islamist of the 20th century, *Sayyid Abul a'la Maududi*, echoed al-Banna's thought. Maududi, a Pakistani, is widely recognised as the primary ideologue who created the influential *Jamaat'I Islami* movement in India. One of his most important contributions to modern Islamist thought, and the basis for understanding his philosophy, is the concept of "God's Sovereignty." That is, " . . . God and not man is the source of law in a Muslim society" (Adams 115). Thus, any system of governance not based on the Word of God, is illegitimate and should be ignored. It then becomes the duty of every genuine Muslim to practice *jihad* (struggle), in an attempt to overthrow corrupt governments and establish an Islamic state. To realize this end, Maududi called for the creation of an "International Revolutionary Party," that would be designed solely to wage violent jihad.

Although perhaps less accusatory than al Banna in terms of the deliberateness of the West to culturally colonize the Islamic world, Maududi does indeed observe the same Europeanization process: "Their ideas and morals, their economic and social life, their law and politics – all are dominated by the West and rapidly adopting its complexion and character" (The Sick Nations of the Modern Age 10).

However, in terms of political systems Maududi claims that all the problems societies face today, both Muslim and Western, stem from the fact that men have been elevated to the status of God. Whether it be a powerful dictator, a democratically elected leader, or perhaps a wider, more abstract category like "the proletariat," contemporary ideologies create a situation where humans are worshipped in the place of God. For Maududi, the result is deplorable:

> The human soul is inevitably deprived of its natural freedom and man's mind and heart and his inborn faculties and aptitudes are subjected to such vexatious restrictions that the proper growth and development of personality arrested . . . this is the sole cause of all the miseries and conflicts from which man has suffered during the long course of human history (Political Theory of Islam 14–15).

As such, he states that Islam " . . . is the very antithesis of secular democracy" (Political Theory of Islam 21). It should be noted that it was not democracy *per se* that Maududi opposed, but legislative structures where the laws were created by humans. In fact he lauded some democratic principles as long as they grew out of Shari'a.[51] But overall, Maududi disseminated a fiercely anti-Western ideology that was to prove extremely influential in the formation of contemporary Islamist movements.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966)

Renowned as the most extreme contemporary Islamist is *Sayyid Qutb*. An Egyptian born in 1906, Qutb is widely recognized as the chief ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the 1950s and 1960s, and of the violent Islamist movements the world over. Very much inspired by Maududi, his populist anti-Western rhetoric strongly appealed to the marginalized masses of mid-20th century Egypt that saw an increasing portion of its economy and public utilities owned and controlled by foreign entities.[52]

For Qutb, the world today is in a sate of *jahilliyah*, or "ignorance of God's Truth." The term "jahilliyah is commonly used to describe pre-Islamic Arabia, but Qutb appropriates this concept to describe contemporary times.[53] Building on Maududi's idea of jihad, Qutb asserts that any true Muslim, when situated in the midst of jahilliyah, has no option but to pursue jihad – forcefully and unapologetically. Muslims should never feel they have to compromise, or apologize for, their beliefs. As such, those who are killed in the name of jihad will be bestowed with God's greatest honour – martyrdom.

Perhaps Qutb's most radical contribution is that he attacked not only Western governments as jahilliyah, but also the rulers of Muslim countries. Thus, he called

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[51] In this context, Maududi talks about a "theodemocracy."
[52] See Amin, for information on the Egyptian economic situation during this period
[53] Conceptually, using jahilliyah to describe modern governments is an extremely powerful strategy as it evokes the memory of Muhammad's struggle against his opposition in the formative years of Islam. In a way it is similar to Khomeini comparing the Shah to the Ummayyid Caliph, Yazid.

for the violent overthrow of his own government and those of other Arab states, something that Al Banna, or Maududi, never did.

Qutb cried out against the Western cultural encroachment that he observed in virtually every sector of Egyptian society. While he highly praised the "genius" of Western science and technology, he warned that spiritually, Western culture was defunct. Thus, while Muslims should indeed study and embrace science, they must reject Western thought and behaviour that aims " . . . first to shake the foundation of Islamic beliefs and gradually demolish the structure of Muslim society" (Qutb 99). Represented as such, one gets the impression that the West is intentionally out to destroy Islam, as opposed to a neutral process whereby Western culture is voluntarily, if not consciously, absorbed by the Muslim world. This increases the intensity of anti-Westernism as it invokes the memory of the Crusades and other aggressive European attempts to dominate Islamic lands. Qutb's inflammatory rhetoric was perceived as such a threat to the Egyptian regime that he was tried, convicted, and hanged, in Cairo in 1966.[54] All in all, Qutb represents the most vitriolic and uncompromisingly antagonistic theoretical attack on Western morality and foreign influence.

The sort of stereotyping of Western society and condemnation of Western neo-colonialism, reflected in the thought of al Banna, Maududi, and Qutb, is a powerful tool. They create a rigid conceptual dichotomy between Islam and the West that reinforces the idea that the values of the two cultures are fundamentally incompatible; diametrically opposed; the negation of each other. By default then, anti-Western Muslims tend to fall back on the only system they know, and the only alternative offered. However, more often than not, the proponents of a return to Islam have a tendency to conflate the concept of "Western" with "modern." Consequently, the Islam offered as an alternative is one that in theory shuns any ideas that emerged subsequent to the "Golden Age."[55] As such, the social vision created is one that

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[54] This is notable as it highlights just how seriously the Egyptian State took the threat posed by Qutb. Whereas, for example, al Banna was assassinated by undetermined assailants (although the secret police was strongly suspected), the fact that Qutb was formally executed illustrates how overt his threat was and that he enjoyed a powerful mobilizing effect among the Egyptian populace.

[55] The Golden Age refers to the time of Muhammad and the first four Caliphs. For many Muslims, this period was marked by the only genuinely Islamic society in history.

ignores 1500 years of social evolution. This illustrates how powerful the Islamic reaction to Western neo-colonialism is. The West is seen as one extreme point on a social spectrum, and Muslim fundamentalists advocate no less than the opposite extreme as the only viable alternative.

Before moving on to the next section, I should elucidate a key point; a point that will be reiterated throughout the following section of this thesis. My argument is not that contemporary Islamic fundamentalism is purely a product of a backlash against Western culture. Indeed, I aim to show that elements of anti-consumerism are, to a greater or lesser extent, indigenous to any Islamic culture, just as it would be theoretically to any genuine Christian society. The effect of cultural globalization is simply one that seems to encourage Islamic cultures to reassert these already present ethics and practices. As such, I hope to ward off criticism that might suggest I am depicting Islamic, or Iranian, society as simply a rejection of Western culture, as opposed to an authentic and organic product of thousands of years of history.

Chapter 6: Iran and Conformity

It is disliked to differ (title of chapter 28, book 93 of Sahih Al-Bukhari).

Individualism and consumerism are intimately intertwined categories of social behaviour and conceptualization. A sort of "chicken or egg" dilemma, it is difficult to assert whether one caused the other. Instead, it is best to understand them as complementary and mutually reinforcing modes of subject formation. The drive to accumulate – to consume – is driven by the individual's desire to satisfy immediate personal wants, and conversely, the more the individual forsakes any notion of a collective interest, the more individual consumption is validated and said wants heightened. Thus, one can argue that a precondition for a consumerist society is an embedded individualistic, atomizing, social consciousness. In this sense, it should come as no surprise that consumerism first took hold in North America and Western Europe, where liberalism (and its emphasis on individual liberty) was strongest. It seems a short leap to begin equating the ability to consume with the ability to exercize one's individual liberty. This concept can be observed in advertising all the time, for example, Dave Collis notes:

> Consumerism's intense individualism is revealed most elegantly by a recent advertisement for National Mutual's superannuation plans. Having painted a life picture with sunny images and sentimental melodies, the advertisement ends in a voiceover which states: 'National Mutual tailored superannuation plans: For the most important person in the world . . . you'" (www.zadok.org).

This Collis refers to as a "hegemonic individualism" that defines consumer culture. It is on this premise that I argue any social movement that explicitly or implicitly promotes collectivism, represents a challenge to the hegemony of consumerism.

The word Islam can be translated as "submission." This of course can be interpreted in many ways, and does not necessarily imply an unconditional refutation of individual choice and expression. However, as interpreted by Khomeini, Islam in practice became an ideology that severely restricted individuality. In effect, a good Muslim became one who toes the party line, never indulges in excessive behaviour, performs the dogmatic rituals that Islam demands, dresses simply and modestly so as

to not stick out in a crowd, and resists sinful and unnecessary pleasures. This chapter will explore how the Khomeinist state acted to encourage conformity in the ideological sphere, and enforce it through policy at ground level. As a result I will argue that this push toward social homogeneity constituted a part of the overall Khomeinist anti-consumerist movement.

The Umma

One of the strongest and most enduring Islamic concepts that transcends all sectarian divides is the *umma*, or society of believers. This term refers to the global Muslim community. The defence of the umma is a rallying cry to the devout. At its extreme, this is the concept that recently drew Islamic volunteers to defend their brethren, and sacrifice their lives in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Afghanistan. The individual Muslim's life and liberty is always subordinate to the best interests of the umma. Further, it is global in scope, and as such, Islamic fundamentalists tend to reject nationalism as a Western construction. According to them, all nationalism has achieved is to artificially divide the Islamic population, pitting Muslim against Muslim. While many leaders in the Muslim world have merely paid lip service to the idea in an attempt to portray an image of piety, some have truly promoted Islamic unity and taken steps to realize it. Perhaps *Gamel Abdul Nasser* was the most revered and powerful of these leaders. However, the short lived United Arab Republic, a state created through the merger of Egypt and Syria, is the only concrete testament to this seemingly utopian ideal.[56] But none the less, a unified global Islamic community, represented in the concept of the umma, is alive and well in the theory and rhetoric of contemporary militant Islamists.

The concept of the umma has played a strong historical role in Iran, dating back to the advent of Islam in ancient Persia:

> One of the effects of the Islamic conquest of Persia was to bring about, to some extent, a fusion of races. The theoretical basis of the new political structure was the *umma*, 'the

[56] The UAR was based more in Nasser's concept of Arab nationalism (and Arab unity), but he considered the Arab world to be one sphere within a larger Islamic sphere. Nasser also aspired to unite the Islamic community and the UAR can be seen as stepping stone toward this goal.

> community'. Which was a group of individuals owing allegiance to one another by ties of religion. Within the *umma* all were equal (Lambton 5).[57]

The umma is still a major ideological force in the contemporary Muslim world. Speaking in the context of globalization, a force she argues responsible for the erosion and division of the nation state, Ankie Hoogvelt comments on the revolutionary power of the concept of the umma which

> . . . gives priority to the world-wide community of Islam and denies its nationalist or even supra-nationalist (as in Pan Arabic) pretensions. This, I believe, makes a historical fit with the denationalizing forces of globalization (196).

So in this sense, the umma represents an Islamic concept that shares a certain characteristic with globalization – the erosion of national borders. But on closer examination a clear distinction must be made. Whereas the umma demands the eradication of national *political* borders, globalization as defined in this thesis, seeks to erode primarily national *economic* borders. As such, Islam is perhaps not as tight a fit with globalization as Hoogvelt suggests.

Khomeini's rhetoric was somewhat ambiguous and contradictory on the question of Islamic unity. His sermons and writings are fraught with messages encouraging both greater Islamic unity *and* nationalism. This is not surprising considering his situation. The mass support the revolution enjoyed did not spring solely from religious Iranians. On the contrary, it came from a diversity of ideological backgrounds including liberal nationalists and Marxists. In fact, it is probably fair to say that most supporters perceived the primary goal of the revolution as national independence more so than the institution of Shari'a and a consequent expansion to, and merger with other Muslim states.[58] Further, the fact that Iran is a predominantly Shi'a state, surrounded by Sunni countries, made a call for greater and immediate political unity with its neighbours quite problematic and indeed untenable.[59]

Instead, Khomeini sought to establish the revolution in Iran first, and then "export" it through actively supporting militant Shi'a groups abroad. As such, his

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[57] Lambton notes that in pre-Islamic Persia, society was hierarchically organized between four classes: 1) the clergy; 2) the warrior class; 3) the bureaucracy; and 4) the peasants (5).

[58] See Kamali for a full description of the different ideological dynamics at play in the revolution.

ideology extended beyond a simple nationalism even though his rhetoric was heavily inundated with nationalist slogans. The erosion of all national borders and identities, and the creation of a global Islamic state was his ultimate ideological aspiration. In other words, while effectively resisting the dominant form of globalization, Khomeini advocated another sort: an anti-globalization globalization. And indeed this notion is now enshrined in the Iranian constitution:

> . . . in the development of external relations, the Revolution will strive, in concert with other Islamic and popular movements, to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community, in accordance with the Qur'anic verse *"This your nation is a single nation, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"* (21:92) . . . (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 19).

The importance of the umma within an analysis of Islam as an anti-globalization force is that by rejecting nationalism, it acts to neutralize the strategies of TNCs in the economic sphere of the global system. In its ideal form, the umma would include labour and environmental standards that would be, well . . . standardized. Foreign investment policies would no longer exist, as nothing would be considered foreign, and indeed national currencies, with their comparative values, would no longer be a factor in terms of investment, as a single currency would prevail. Further, all members of the umma would be perceived as undifferentiated Muslims regardless of geography. Wealth, in line with various Islamic precepts, would be redistributed from wealthy regions to poorer ones, much like transfer payments in some federal systems. No longer would international competition over natural, economic, and human resources result in dramatic structural, regional inequalities. As a consequence of all this, consumerism would be dealt a serious blow. While mass production would still exist, producers would not be able to utilize the various facets of the contemporary global economic structure to produce goods on the scale and level of increasing efficiency they do today.

But it is on the level of the individual subject that the umma is perhaps more a profound anti-consumerist force. What does it say about the individual? Well, to a certain extent, it says "you are not special," a firm contradiction of what the average child is repeatedly informed by its loving parents in the West. To think of oneself

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[59] It should be noted that most surrounding Muslim countries did not support the Iranian revolution.

more so as part of a greater whole, as opposed to an autonomous and ego-oriented, potential-filled agent, surely dampers the need to express one's individuality through conspicuous consumption. Now this is not intended as an absolute statement, or to depict Islamic society as an undifferentiated collection of robots, but to hint at ideological tendencies that affect consciousness. Individuality and expressions thereof exist in all cultures, and it is safe to say that they represent fundamental aspects of human nature. But ideological emphasis on individuality will surely affect the level to which individuality is prioritized and manifested in cultural forms.

Moderation

The Koran is full of references to the evils of envy and excess. The latter is directly referred to in many suras as a sin that will surely incur "God's wrath." The penultimate example of this message is of course represented in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (39:28-35), in which the entire populations of these cities were destroyed – save the pious Lot and his family – for their decadent and deviant behaviour. The condemnation of excess includes the amassing of wealth: "The desire of increasing riches occupieth you/ Till ye come to the grave / Nay! But in the end ye shall know -/ Nay! Once more, in the end ye shall know *your folly*" (15: 1-4); as well as excessive pleasures:

> When the collars shall be on their necks and the chains to drag them into Hell: then in the fire shall they be burned/ Then shall it be said to them, 'Where are they whom ye made the objects of joint worship with God?' They shall say, 'They have vanished away from us. Yea, it was not on which we called heretofore.' Thus God leadeth the unbelievers astray./ - 'This for you because of your unrighteous insolence and immoderate joys on Earth (40: 73-75).

The Nahj ul Balagha reinforces these edicts. In sermon 21, Ali claims:

> Remember! Extremes of right and left will lead you astray; moderation is the best course for you to adopt. It is a path that will guide you to the true impressions of the doctrines and life of the Prophet. It will lead you to the fountainhead of Sunnah (Tradition) and it is the correct route to liberation (25);

and again in Sermon 112: "The Prophet always considered a life spent in the pursuit of pleasure as disdainful and evil. He loathed and hated such a life" (Ali 130).

The problem with excessive behaviour and the acquisition of great wealth seems to be twofold. On the one hand, they distract the individual from living a life committed to God and His teachings, and on the other hand, they cause envy in others. This thesis will speak more so to the latter by-product of excess as it reflects one of the driving forces of modern day consumerism. Certainly envy is a motivating force for material accumulation. As I argued in chapter three, visual symbols of wealth and prosperity act as clear signifiers of social status. It has been shown that people who lack wealth and material goods will go to irrational lengths in an attempt to portray an image to the contrary; to "keep up with the neighbours" so to speak.

The Koran touches on this issue primarily through the condemnation of vanity and the promotion of humbleness. Sura 17, verses 39-40 states: "And walk not proudly on the earth, for thou canst not cleave the earth, neither shalt thou reach to the mountains in height:/ All this is evil; odious to thy Lord." (17: 39-40); and sura 28 relates the story of *Korah* whose life and possessions were destroyed by God for his vanity (28: 76-82).

These warnings are even more explicit in the Nahj ul Balagha. According to Ali, material wealth is predetermined by God and as such,

> . . . if you find some of your brothers having many children and much wealth, do not envy them and do not try to hurt them and do not try to harm them . . . Remember, however rich a man may be he cannot find himself above the helping hands and good opinion of his people, he cannot dispense with their sympathies . . . (32-33).

In fact, Ali himself is reputed to have rejected all luxuries in his personal life in large part to ward off the envy that such things would invoke in others (Azari 23).[60]

Khomeini himself was very conscious of the dangers of envy and its correlation with excessive behaviour and accumulation. However, his critique of this phenomenon was grounded in a more contemporary anti-Western framework where "excess" refers specifically to conspicuous consumption and immoderate behaviour. By updating the aforementioned Koranic verses and sermons of Ali, Khomeini effectively drew a connection between God's word and the denunciation of contemporary consumerism. Indeed he was quite adept at superimposing ancient moral frameworks on modern trends and events. This was a strategy he utilized

successfully to reassert the relevance of Islam in the 20th century. In this case, he observed the development of Western decadence and envy in Iran during the shah's reign:

> The importation of foreign products of whatever category, the induced preoccupation of women and men, especially the youth, with a wide variety of imported goods, including cosmetics, luxury items and childish toys, the pitting of people and families against each other in a race for consumption – it is a sad story (Khomeini, *Last Will and Testament* 14).

From this general critique, one can more readily understand the motive behind Khomeini's policies that in effect outlawed a host of Western style products, a subject that I will touch on later.

Clothing and Fashion

As I suggested earlier, the concepts of fashion and "branding" are major components of Western consumerism. Fashion is a medium through which individuals attempt to define and project their individuality; their personal image is inextricably linked to the brands they adorn. The fashion industry thrives on the consumer's quest for personal expression. It fuels unnecessary consumption through the promotion of obsoletism and brand name fetishization. As such, a genuinely anti-consumerist ideology would challenge the underlying premises of fashion. I will argue that Khomeinism did just that.

This, of course, relates to the notions of humbleness and the emphasis on moderation in Islam. In the Koran, dressing modestly is treated more in a positive context. That is, it is considered important to ensure your body is properly covered in public (as opposed to a negative context where dressing modestly refers to *not* wearing extremely flamboyant clothing or owning excessive amounts thereof). According to the Koran, nakedness is a sin, as Adam and Eve found out after eating the forbidden fruit (12: 19-26). In fact, clothing is a divine gift to humans, provided in order to cover themselves: "O children of Adam! Now have we sent down to you raiment to hide your nakedness, and splendid garments; but the raiment of piety – this is best . . . this is one of the signs of God, that man haply may reflect" (12: 26).

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[60] Ali's humbleness is discussed at greater length in the section on taghlid.

However, there is also Koranic reference to modest dress in the negative sense. According to J.M. Rodwell,[61] the verse "O Prophet! Say to thy wives, If ye desire this present life and its braveries, come then, I will provide for you, and dismiss you with an honourable dismissal" (33: 30), is a reiteration of Muhammad's response to his wives who demanded he buy them expensive dresses and other such luxuries. He warned them that with the luxuries would come divorce. As a result, they retracted their demands (Rodwell 437).[62] So here one sees that clothing is primarily aimed at covering the body as opposed to exhibiting a specific or individual style; it is a clear promotion of function over fashion.

Perhaps the most salient illustration of this Islamic ideal is represented in the *ihram*, or pilgrim's robe, worn by believers during the *Hajj*. The ihram " . . . generally consists of two pieces of cotton, or linen, or woollen cloth, without seam or ornament, one of which is wrapped round the loins, and the other thrown over the shoulders" (Rodwell 485). For the duration of the pilgrimage, all participants, despite nationality, class, or branch of Islam, wear identical ihrams. It is here that the concept of the umma is most profoundly realized and serves as a model for the global Muslim population. The ihram represents unity and equality while at the same time encouraging conformity.

There is one very significant comment regarding the issue of modest dress in the Nahj ul Balagha that harkens back to an earlier section of this thesis where I spoke of Ali's concern of stirring envy in others. The story he recounts is of a man, *Ala ibn Zaid*, who Ali chastizes for owning a luxurious home. However, his criticism was not that owning a large house is sinful in itself, but that anyone blessed with such a home should make it a " . . . centre of . . . hospitality, [where you should] treat your relatives well . . ." (296). After hearing him speak, Zaid urges Ali to counsel his brother who has become a hermit and rejected all material things except the absolute basic necessities. Ali approaches the brother and reprimands him for his behaviour claiming that it is wicked to shun what God has provided and made acceptable for humanity; that he has lowered himself well beneath the acceptable level of modesty.

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[61] Rodwell is the translator of the copy of the Koran I use.
[62] See also Shariati, Braswell Jr. for references to this story.

However the brother protests Ali's scolding, asserting that he only follows the example of the Imam (Ali) himself. He points out that Ali wears the most meagre of clothes, and eats only the plainest food. Ali replies:

> Alas friend! You are mistaken; you are not like me. God has made it incumbent upon true and just Imams to keep themselves on the level of the poorest and humblest of men; so that those poor and humble persons may not feel shame and humiliation on account of their condition, may not lose heart, may not give way to frustration and grief and may maintain their self-respect (296).

This sermon raises an interesting point. Ali does not advocate that all Muslims should starve themselves or wear hair shirts in order to prove their piety. Instead he creates a higher moral standard for leaders, who become less a model for absolute emulation, than embodiments of a principle of modesty that should regulate a good Muslim's behaviour and appearance.[63] But the core message still stands: be moderate in your dress and behaviour, anything more is a sin.

Women

The pre-Khomeinist indigenous women's movement and the modernizing efforts of the Pahlavis had established a marked improvement in terms of the rights of Iranian women.[64] In the past 100 years, women, previously quite secondary to men in virtually all personal liberties: had attained *de jure* equality in regards to personal and legal rights, gained access to the wider labour market and higher education, and achieved suffrage. It is true that in the formative years of these reforms, most Iranian women were extremely enthusiastic regarding their personal prospects. However, the mood quickly soured as the expected opportunities never materialized. As was the case for most lower and middle class Iranians in general, the newly generated wealth passed them by in favour of the upper classes who – through nepotism, and exclusive and affluent social networks – effectively monopolized activity in the new economy (Omid 179). Further, the radical changes taking place in Iran caused profound

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[63] Khomeini preaches along the same line, as he asserts in Islamic Government, " . . . [l]eave the ornaments of life and be content with a life of sustenance so that people may follow the example of your abstinence and the pride and loftiness of your souls and so that you may be good model for them" (113).

[64] Here I am referring to "rights" as perceived in the Western liberal tradition.

cultural disruptions as Western and traditional values clashed. The growing economic discrepancy between rich and poor, was paralleled by a developing rift between Western secularists and Islamic traditionalists. As Keddie notes:

> The "two-cultures" phenomenon in Iran (that is different cultures for the elite and the masses) is largely a phenomenon of the Pahlavi period, before which there was a gradation but no sharp break between elite and popular cultures. This can be seen in such elementary spheres as dress, homes, styles of furnishing, means of locomotion, and mosque attendance (183).

Consequently, women began to re-emphasize or return to their Islamic roots in protest of the shah's reforms. And indeed many, particularly older, more traditional Iranian women felt that the Western women's liberation movement had actually hurt those it aimed to empower.[65]

However it was not only the female "masses," but also academics that advocated a return to tradition. As Omid asserts: "The female intelligentsia also was lured by Islam. Intellectuals were amongst the most ardent and articulate advocates of Islamification as a means of 'liberating' Iranian women from the trap of westoxification" (179). A mixture of liberal feminist and Islamic doctrine emerged that while denouncing Western feminism for forsaking traditional female responsibilities like motherhood, still maintained the fundamental equality of the sexes through a feminist interpretation of the Koran (Omid, 179-181). As such, women from all classes and social backgrounds were mobilized in common resistance.

To give one a sense of the Khomenist state's justification for its treatment of women, I will cite Ayotollah *Murtaza Mutaharri*. Mutaharri, a leading ideologue of the revolution, and most trusted of Khomeini's followers, was a major advocate of restricting the association of the sexes. Azari cites four reasons that he provides as support for his argument (I have significantly condensed them here). First, the free

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[65] Azari notes that this criticism must be understood within the cultural context: "One point that has to be made clear here is that these women, and others like them with either no first-hand knowledge of the west or a very superficial one, perceive the various data on high divorce rate, drug addiction, homosexuality, illegitimate births etc., relentlessly presented to them by the religious leaders, only within their own context. Since in their environment divorce means a great hardship and a loss of status for a woman, a higher divorce rate must mean far more unhappy and destitute women living in the west. Similarly, with illegitimacy; an Iranian woman (like women in most other Muslim countries) may receive a greater degree of sympathy and support from the family, as well as the state, if she caught leprosy than if she conceived an illegitimate child" (59).

association of women and men leads to uncontrollable sexual excitement and lust that results in profound distractions and major social disruptions. Second, by containing this unabridged sexuality to the household, it strengthens the family. Third, keeping men away from women in public increases and reinforces the social fabric. Finally, by maintaining the firm sexual divisions of labour – where men employ their naturally superior physical and mental abilities in complementary occupations, and women utilize their naturally superior emotional and nurturing talents – makes the most effective use of each sex's abilities. As such, women will contribute more to society, and be respected by men, the more proper and chaste they behave (Azari 50).

The dichotomous distinction between men and women represented by the thought of Mutaharri was one shared by most of the Iranian religious establishment including, to a lesser extent, the more liberal ulama. It was important as it provided a theoretical justification, based on an authoritative Islamic common-sense understanding, for the "natural" social divisions between men and women, and a subsequent reassertion of traditional gender roles. Nowhere was this perception more indicative than in the realm of education. When the universities slowly began reopening in 1983, after the Islamification process, the new educational direction was clear regarding women. First, the proportion of female students in relation to males dropped from 40% in the pre-revolutionary period, to 10%. Women were barred from 97 areas of study, and encouraged to enter traditionally female subject areas like nursing and teaching; going even so far as to open some all-women institutions.[66] While mixed gender classes were allowed to exist, a controversial debate developed among the ulama as to whether women should be allowed to speak in such classes. The argument on the side of gagging women in these circumstances was that their voices might sexually excite male students to distraction (Omid, ch. 8). The Islamification of the university system represents the gendered conformative aspects of the revolution as women were expected to conform to a particular conception of what being a woman means.

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[66] An example of an all-women university is the school of nursing in Qom (Omid 164).

The Chador

Of course for many Westerners, the first thing that comes to mind when Islam and clothing are whispered in the same breath, is the veil, or *chador*.[67] It is one of the most controversial topics in both Islamic and Western circles. From a liberal democratic, or Western feminist perspective, the enforced veiling of women is a clear example of an abuse of fundamental human rights, and a blatant patriarchal control mechanism respectively. However, from some Islamic viewpoints it represents something much different. I am not interested in entering this debate. I am only concerned with exploring the Islamic theoretical bases of the wearing of the chador and the social consequences of its enforcement.

The controversy surrounding the chador is largely a result of the dubiousness of its Koranic support. The verse in question comes from sura 33:

> O wives of the Prophet! Ye are not as other women. If ye fear God, be not too complaisant of speech, lest the man of unhealthy heart should lust after you, but speak with discreet speech./ And abide still in your houses, and go not in public decked as in the days of your former ignorance,[68] but observe prayer, and pay the impost, and obey God and the Apostle: for God only desireth to put away filthiness from you as his household, and with cleansing to cleanse you (33: 32-33);

and verse 53:

> O Believers! Enter not into the houses of the Prophet, save by his leave, for a meal, without wasting his time. When ye are invited then enter, and when ye have eaten then disperse at once. And engage not in familiar talk for this would cause the Prophet trouble, and he would be ashamed to bid you go; but God is not ashamed to say the truth. And when ye would ask any gift of his wives, ask it from behind a veil. Purer will this be for your hearts and for their hearts . . . (33: 53).

Clearly these passages do not provide an undeniably explicit command from God that all women should cover their faces or hair in public. Indeed, a significant degree of interpretation is necessary to reach this conclusion. But none the less, this interpretation has become dominant in many Islamic movements including Khomeinism.

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[67] The chador refers specifically to the Iranian full body veil, which is designed to cover a woman's body from neck to ankles, and wrap around her head so that no hair is exposed.

[68] This is interpreted as the period before Islam, when women did not wear the chador.

The contemporary history of the chador in Iran is widely unknown in the West, and many may find it surprising. The veiling decree did not just happen in a historical vacuum, and forcibly against the will of *all* Iranian women. Indeed, as I alluded to earlier, many female Muslims voluntarily cover their bodies and heads for religious reasons, and others (including non-Muslims) began to wear the chador in the 1970s as a political statement; a rebellious act in defiance of the shah's westernizing and modernizing agenda (Azari 1). So there was a certain level of popular support surrounding the veil, largely in the context of a rejection of Westernism, and indeed the ideologues of the revolution formed their justifications along these lines.

In large part for a significant number of women, the attraction to Islam and the revolution was a result of the writings of Ali Shariati.[69] It should be noted that his ideas in this regard, are not indicative of the general post-revolutionary approach by the ruling clergy. Indeed, after the revolution he was denounced by Khomeini and other leading Ayatollahs as un-Islamic. At the same time, his thought cannot be simply equated with Western liberalism. While it was extremely progressive in some respects – seriously attacking traditional conservatism and religious orthodoxy – it equally and vehemently denounced Western materialism and sexual immorality.

In his own way, Shariati was a major proponent of full gender equality. He wanted women to pursue education, and be fully involved in the public sphere. However, he observed the gradual import of the Western feminine ideal – through the mass media – as a threat to the moral values of Islam. While he acknowledged that many women in the West had achieved – through education, and meaningful employment – what he considered to be an upstanding and fulfilling lifestyle, he argued this was not the image of Western women exported to Iran. Instead, it was the glamorous and sexy supermodels and movie stars who were not respected for their

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[69] Shariati was one of the most popular and influential ideologues of the Iranian revolution. Born in 1933, he received a PhD in sociology from the Sorbonne in 1965 after which he returned to Iran and delivered lectures at the *Hosaynieh-e-Ershad* school beginning in 1969. These lectures drew huge crowds, and were recorded and distributed in promotion of the revolution. He was considered a serious threat by SAVAK (Iranian secret police) for his Islamic-Socialist populism. The Hosaynieh was forcibly closed in 1972. Shariati died five years later in London. Officially, the cause of death was a heart attack, but there is speculation SAVAK was involved. Shariati is considered by some to have played an even more integral role in the revolution than Khomeini did. His more modern ideas and passionate speaking style appealed particularly to the youth, and much of his thought has been co-opted by the Khomeinist state.

minds or talents, but, if respected at all, for their bodies and sexuality (Azari 33). However, he never advocated the enforced wearing of the chador.

In general, the consensus among the revolutionary ideologues, was similar to Shariati in this last respect, i.e., women had been degraded and victimized by Western society. Their bodies were objectified and used to push consumer goods. As such, if women are to be treated with respect, their sexuality should be hidden – literally. To ensure this policy was observed, a special policing force – commonly referred to as the "morality police" – was set up to patrol the streets and intimidate or arrest any transgressors.

Now once again, I do not want to enter a debate on the issues of differing cultural conceptions of respect. However, there are clear anti-consumerist consequences in a society that encourages this sort of ethic. Primarily, the uniform black chador, can act as a social (class) equalizer, as Azari notes:

> The pressures on women to compete publicly on a physical level through an adherence to western fashions could apparently be dissipated by the adoption of a uniform dress that modestly covered their body and hair. . . the chador, came to be regarded as a leveller of wealth and physical distinction (Azari 154).

The first consequence that comes to mind when I consider the above statement is that the process of "branding" is effectively neutralized. Unless big name clothing merchandisers find a way to sneak their logos on to these traditional garments, it is hard to imagine the introduction of a line of "Gap" or "Tommy Hilfiger" chadors. When it comes to chadors, while they may be distinguished by colour or fabric, there is much less room to create different lifestyle images based on the fetishization of brand-name logos than with Western styles.

Further, when one considers that cosmetics were also banned, I would ask: how could a company the likes of *Revlon*, *Estée Lauder*, or *L'Oréal* turn a significant profit in a society such as this? Cosmetics sales thrive on female competition. Although the relationship between make-up and beauty is certainly a social construct, nonetheless it has been widely adopted by women and men, especially in Western culture. Of course the veil comes off at home, and indeed Iranian women adorn themselves with makeup in their private confines, but the principle still remains, and it is specifically relevant to lower class women: the social pressure when in public to

apply cosmetics (which in many cases they could not really afford) is not as strong as it might be. As a result, the concept of *de facto* public beauty competitions is largely eliminated at least on the surface, and overtime, the hope is it may genuinely fade from the Iranian consciousness.

The Media

The body of literature dealing with the Iranian revolution is inundated with the topic of Khomeini's manipulation of the mass media to his political ends. It is well documented that his revolutionary rhetoric was first spread through the mosques in the form of sermons and later disseminated through the medium of contraband cassettes, phoned in from Ankara, Najaf, and Paris, and recorded in Iran. As the pre-revolutionary state maintained an absolute control of all media transmissions, this was the Islamists only, albeit effective, means of getting their message across. Of course this all changed when Khomeini ascended to power. He clearly understood the power of modern communication technologies as tools to disseminate revolutionary rhetoric, and although he promised unrestricted free expression in the realm of the media, when the revolution was established, he kept a tighter control on the information apparatus than even the shah did during his reign.

During the time of the shah, modernizing the information infrastructure was a major policy goal. For example, the official target of the "National Iranian Radio and Television Organisation" (NIRT) was to get 70% of the population television coverage by the end of March (1978) and 100% access to radio transmissions (Iran Almanac 133-34). In the period 1951-76 the number of personal radios almost doubled from 2.5 million to 4 million, and in 1977, the number of television sets reached 1.7 million. In the realm of cinema, in 1968, 80 cities had movie theatres versus 140 in 1976. In absolute terms, the number of theatres in Iran grew from 110 in 1951, to 460 in 1976, and correspondingly, the annual number of theatre-goers rose from 20 million in 1963/64 (430 million rials in receipts) to 110 million in 1976/77 (4 billion rials in receipts!) (Iran Almanac 137). And finally, during the shah's era, Iran witnessed a dramatic rise in the availability of foreign newspapers and magazines.

The Almanac makes an interesting comment on this last point; a comment that may very well be illustrative of the irrational fetishization of anything Western that plays an important role in the expansion of consumer culture:

> Every week, people in Iran spend millions of rials on foreign newspapers and magazines – and that's in addition to the local English, French and German language newspapers . . . One interesting fact that the survey uncovered was that the buyers of these papers and magazines are not necessarily fluent in the language of the publications they buy. They may spend hours with a dictionary as they tackle some major news story (140).[70]

The above statistics are clearly indicative of the shah's desire to modernize Iran and import not only Western technology, but culture as well. With the introduction of television, sit-coms could not be far behind and with the inception of movie theatres, Hollywood would not be long in coming.[71] Plainly, Khomeini and his supporters perceived a threat: "The radio, the television, the print media, the theatres and cinema have been successfully used to 'intellectually anesthesize nations, and especially the youth" (*Last Will and Testament* 19). Perhaps it is indicative of how much the mass entertainment industry was associated with the West that the only significantly violent event during the revolution was on August 19, 1978, when a movie house in Abadan was set ablaze killing 400 people.[72]

Consequently, the Khomeinist regime immediately set out to restrict Western influences in the mass media. In early 1980, all opposition papers were closed. As with all other sectors of society, television stations, newspapers and journals had ideological units or Islamic societies incorporated into their organizations. These groups effectively acted as censors ensuring no anti-Islamic, anti-government, or pro-Western discourse was disseminated to the public. What it all amounted to was " . . .

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[70] There may be other explanations for this phenomenon besides a blind adoration of Western culture. For example, those who purchased these publications may have seen them as containing genuinely better journalism, or as more reliable sources of information as they would be less censored by the government.

[71] As Chelkowski and Dabashi note: "Perhaps the most significant impact of cinema on modern Iranian politics is its opening up the limited access of the general public to the outside world. . . . Pictures of fantastic opulence and wealth in Europe and the United States were reviewed by an audience in the slums of south Tehran. The power of this imagery lay in implication rather than in what it explicitly said or intended. The background of overstuffed shopping malls, supermarkets, opulent neighbourhoods, conspicuous consumptions, cars, uninhibited sex (however censored for the Iranian audience) cumulatively gave rise to a recognition that life could be and was different in other parts of the world" (185-187).

a bland conformity . . . forcibly imposed on intellectuals, authors, film-makers and educationalists (Omid 153). The media then, as common to many dictatorial regimes, was primarily used to transmit ideological conformity and stifle dissent. However, in the context of this thesis it is important to note that Khomeini's censorship was not limited to explicit, editorial-style criticism of his government, or blatantly pro-Western opinions, it also aimed to remove all western *images* from the public sphere. In many ways images or symbols are much more powerful than words (especially in a country with a high illiteracy rate). Alternative realities can be more easily conveyed and etched in the mind through pictures. So, for example, it was not uncommon at this time to pick up an Iranian or foreign magazine and find images of women with their heads blacked-out, or indeed entire pages missing (Omid 157).

But Khomeini certainly did not object to using modern communication technologies to spread his thought and ensure his subjects were inundated with glorious revolutionary images. Indeed, he was the first Iranian ruler to address the population via television. During the war with Iraq, images of young boys outfitted with red headbands and kalishnikov rifles, praising the virtues of defending their faith against the heretical Iraqis, would appeal to other male youths to enlist in support of the war effort – and enlist they did, in droves (Moin 250). In terms of entertainment, media transmissions were limited to strictly Islamic programming. An excerpt I came across in the travel guide, Lonely Planet Iran, might be indicative of this media regulation (at least from a Western standpoint): "Iran offers very little in the way of organized entertainment or nightlife. Bring a book. Bring lots of them. Iranian television is so uninteresting that a lot of Iranians don't bother watching it; they spend their leisure time visiting family and friends, playing with their children and going to the mosque" (115).

Although in many ways, the Western media promotes conformist behaviour, i.e., encouraging readers or viewers to consume, there is some, albeit limited, room for dissenting voices to be heard, or alternative lifestyles promoted (or at the very least, the option to choose what *kind* of consumer to be). However, in the state-

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[72] It is not absolutely clear who was responsible for the fire, that is, revolutionaries or the government (they blamed each other). In any event, the incident helped rally support for the opposition.

controlled and heavily censored system in post-revolutionary Iran there was only one option broadcast; one lifestyle offered as acceptable; and that was the narrowly defined Islamic model as constructed by Khomeini.

The period of the pre-revolutionary government in Iran, leading right up to the 1979 overthrow, witnessed a marked growth of advertising campaigns designed to encourage Iranians to consume. The streets of Tehran were inundated with billboards and neon café and restaurant signs promoting various Western products. Television and radio programs began to broadcast the standard American commercials in Farsi. In short, mass advertising had been introduced to Iran.[73]

How much exactly the average Iranian embraced or abhorred this influx of advertising is impossible to say. It is however clear what Khomeini and his followers thought about the situation. Immediately the billboards came down. The television and radio were purged of all Western content. But of course, the billboards and media transmissions were quickly replaced. But foreign products and lifestyles were no longer the commodities being sold. In their place, Islam, martyrdom, and anti-Imperialism, were put on display for the public to absorb. Similar to the previously mentioned trend in the West, where commercial advertising has migrated to every conceivable space, Iranian revolutionary rhetoric did the same. A good example is a series of bubble-gum wrappers that read "Salutations to the warriors of Islam, Death to America" (Chelkowski and Dabashi 307). In effect, the revolution was selling the revolution.[74] On a structural level one can only conclude that this process indeed represented a truly counter-hegemonic campaign. In effect, the expansion of consumerism was dealt a major blow, as mass advertising constitutes a major medium through which consumerist values are transmitted.

This then gives one a general understanding of how the enforced conformism of the Khomeinist state can be understood as a process intimately intertwined with, and complementary to, theories of anti-consumerism. By restricting behaviour, dress,

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[73] Imagine my surprise (delight?) when I opened to the first page of the 1978 Iran Almanac and was revealed a *Bayer* ad boasting the greatness of its pharmaceuticals. As I leafed through the next eight pages I encountered similar full page promotions for: 1) *Marlboro*; 2) *The Bank of Iran and the Middle East* (part of the *Hong Kong Bank Group*); 3) *The Bank of Iran*; 4) *Iran Air*; 5) *Pepsi*; 6) *Aeroflot* (a soviet airline); 7) *The International Bank of Iran* (a subsidiary of *Chase Manhattan*); and 8) *Canon* (cameras). The Almanac even has a built in *Merit Light* cigarettes book mark!

and media transmissions, to strict standards that fall within a limited field of options, many of the driving forces of consumerism are challenged. Khomeini's ideal society was one where everyone basically looks the same – in real life *and* on television.

[74] See Chelkowski and Dabashi for a fuller description of the semiotic aspects of the revolution.

Chapter 7: Khomeinist Economics

This emphasis on homogeneity in lifestyle is part of the Islamic economic culture where individuals are not guaranteed equal income, status or wealth, but are simultaneously enjoined from being conspicuously different (Amuzegar 20).

The notion of a clearly defined "Islamic economic system" is an ambiguous one at best. There are as many forms of Islamic economics as there are nation-states claiming to be Islamic. The Koran does not provide a clear set of rules and principles by which Muslims should run their economic affairs, save for a few concrete statements referring to obligatory alms (*zakat*), and more generalized and vague comments regarding the onus of the individual to act responsibly when conducting financial transactions. While these guidelines can provide an observer with a general framework in which to conceptualize an Islamic economic order, one must approach any study of Muslim economics by a case-to-case method. In short, Islamic economics is a highly interpretive subject, which will vary from location to location, depending on local cultural and geographic factors. The following section will attempt to develop a brief synopsis of the economic system that Khomeini envisioned, and that which he imposed upon Iran.

First, a few words about the general guiding tenets of Islamic economics as interpreted by the Ayatollah. The rhetoric of contemporary Islamic Fundamentalist movements tends to contain a strong populist element. The poor and oppressed are always the social demographic most appealed to, and Khomeini was no different in this regard, as he states in Islam and Revolution: "Islam has solved the problem of poverty and inscribed it at the very top of its program: '*Sadaqat* is for the poor.'[75] Islam insists that first, the conditions of the poor must be remedied, the conditions of the deprived must be remedied" (120). Invariably, the establishment of a society ruled by Shari'a promises a utopian liberation of the hungry and destitute masses. However, Islam differs from Marxist or socialist populism in some fundamental categories.[76] For example, ownership of private property and personal accumulation

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[75] Sadaqat is an Islamic non-monetary tax.

[76] Although there are many Islamic scholars that have attempted to reconcile Islam with socialism, like for example Ali Shariati and Mahmud Taleghani.

of wealth are sacred trusts, and indeed divinely approved practices that need to be utilized towards the betterment and progress of society. This automatically places Islam at irreconcilable odds with a strict Marxist economic approach where private property is equated with theft. However, Islam also differs distinctly from a pure laissez-faire capitalism. Whereas modern capitalism thrives on maximizing production and consumption, regardless of their nature or social usefulness, in Islam " . . . the power to exercise ownership [is not] total: it is constrained by necessity and moderation. That is, the use of property is limited to productive, non-extravagant, and rational activity" (Rahnema and Behdad 19). In short, Islam injects a certain sense of moral responsibility into the realm of private business, and it is the role of the state to ensure this morality is observed and maintained.[77] More generally, it can be said that whereas a purely capitalist system views an unfettered economy as an end in itself, Islam perceives an ethically controlled, free-market as a means to a greater social good (Behdad 207). This concept is enshrined in a section of the introduction to the Iranian Constitution entitled: "The Economy Is a Means, Not an End." It goes on to say:

> In strengthening the foundations of the economy, the fundamental consideration will be satisfying the material needs of man in the course of his overall growth and development. This principle contrasts with other economic systems, where the aim is the concentration and accumulation of wealth and the maximization of profit. . . . In Islam, the economy is a means, intended only to contribute to the attainment of the ultimate goal (Algar 21).

Consistent with the basic tenets of Islam, Khomeini defended his economic interventionism on the grounds that while the free market can in fact lead to social justice, a strong government must regulate it to ensure the market does not create the huge discrepancy between rich and poor as witnessed in the capitalist West. He states this quite clearly in his Last Will and Testament:

> One of the topics which needs to be recalled here is that Islam does not approve of tyrannical Capitalism, which tends to deprive the oppressed and downtrodden masses . . . but at the other extreme Islam is not a system of government like communism and Marxist-Leninism . . . but an Islamic government is rather a moderate system of government which recognizes private ownership only to a level and allowing it only within bounds . . . (22).

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[77] In many ways Islamic economics resembles social democratic systems.

Immediately following the revolution, Khomeini undertook a major reconstruction of the Iranian economy. Formerly private (foreign and domestically owned) enterprises were nationalized and formerly un-regulated industries were regulated. It is interesting that in his rhetoric, Khomeini strongly emphasized the importance of the free market, while his policies heavily tended toward statist interventionism (Behdad 105).[78] By way of brief overview, Iranian industrialization really began in the era of Reza Shah senior (1925-41), accelerated in the Mossadeq period (1951-53), and exploded during the reign of the shah (1953-79).[79] It was during the latter period that Iran first witnessed direct foreign capital investment in the non-oil production sector (Rahnema 130). The shah followed the traditional import-substitution model of development, focussing industry on light consumer good production. While his father's industrial program was largely state controlled and funded, and worked within a protectivist framework, the shah dramatically liberalized and privatized this process.

The revolutionary state quickly reversed this trend. Soon after the revolution, the new government established the "National Iranian Industrial Organization" (NIIO) to manage the 464 newly nationalized companies (this number later expanded to 700) (Rahnema 138). Along with this, all foreign trade was nationalized. The goal was two-fold: to re-assert Iranian control in the economy, and to ensure industries observed morality in their functioning. For an observer to emphasize the former goal as the primary objective of the revolution, i.e., to claim the revolution was purely economically motivated, is perhaps short-sighted. As I will show in the next paragraph, by Islamifying sources of economic production, and other sectors of society, the revolutionary state acted in a way conflictual with modern economic rationality that stresses efficiency and profit maximization.

Indeed, Khomeini was fairly consistent when it came to the Islamification process, particularly in the formative years of the revolution.[80] His rhetoric, which

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[78] This may have been largely a result of Khomeini attempting to clearly distance himself from the strong Marxist element in the population.

[79] The shah's reign was actually the period of 1941-79, but it was the post-coup period of 1953-79 that his industrial policy really took off.

[80] However, there are some examples where he gave way to pragmatism. For instance, Khomeini rejected the idea of taxing the well-off bazaari class (middle-size shop owners). The bazaaris played

always subordinated economic growth to moral objectives, was by and large played out in his policies. For example, public service positions were filled by the most pious candidates as opposed to the most qualified or competent (Amuzegar 23). Another illustration is the revolutionary state's closing of all universities for two years for Islamic restructuring. When the schools were finally re-opened, the number of spots for theological students had grown drastically while other fields were reduced. This becomes important when one compares trends in contemporary Western academia where programs in the humanities and social sciences are starving financially, while any new funds tend to be channelled directly into the coffers of professional faculties like engineering, computer sciences, business, etc.. In other words, the emphasis in Western post-secondary education is on economically "productive" fields. Thus, Khomeini's rejection of this trend is indicative of his commitment to Islamification over traditional economic interests, not only in theory but practice.

Zakat and Khoms

I do not want to spend any significant amount time on the issue of Islamic taxes but any discussion of Islamic economics demands at least a cursory mention of the concept. In both major sects, *zakat* is one of the "Five Pillars" of Islam. The precept of zakat demands that every Muslim, who enjoys an income greater than a set level, contributes 2.5% of her wealth to the poor.[81] *Khoms*, is a similar taxation (5%) but one peculiar to Shi'ism, and is compulsory in addition to, not as a substitute for, zakat.[82] According to Khomeini, the revenue accumulated by the collection of

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an extremely important role during the revolution in support of the Ayattollah. They opposed the shah because they feared foreign competition (Abrahamian 40).

[81] According to Khomeini's Resalah, this only applies to wealth in the form of: 1) wheat; 2) barley; 3) dates; 4) currants; 5) gold; 6) silver; 7) camels; 8) cows; and 9) sheep (246). But it is now commonly understood that zakat refers to total net wealth.

[82] A Muslim is obligated to pay khoms, or "fifths," when he profits from seven specific sources: 1) earnings; 2) mining; 3) treasures; 4) lawful property mixed with unlawful property; 5) jewels obtained by diving into the sea; 6) loot; and 7) land that a tributary infidel buys from a Muslim (Khomeini, Resalah 232)

khoms, should have been enough to fund all the affairs of the Islamic state (Islamic Government 21).[83]

Every contemporary society has some form of system of taxation, including the most consumeristic in the world. However, in secular political systems, these taxes are not absolute in the same way as in the Muslim world. In fact, I would assert that the global spread of the neoliberal ideology is paralleled by a corresponding growth of resistance to, or a discursive invalidation of, taxation. Tax becomes synonymous with theft and the inhibition of personal liberty and economic development. Underlying all this is the trend towards extreme levels of individualism and the perceived right to unlimited material consumption.

How then do circumstances change when not only the prescribed levels, but even the very principle of taxation is considered divine and immutable? Well to start, the debate over its validity is effectively avoided. It becomes an *a priori* truth. Even if a good Muslim refuses to pay zakat or khoms on the grounds that those collecting it are using it improperly (as many do), this does not delegitimize the taxes in principle. Then on a social level what does this imply? It reaffirms the value of the collective over the individual; the importance of social welfare; the invalidity of purely laissez faire capitalism; and thus some of the underpinnings of consumer culture.

Usury

Another well known Islamic precept is the rejection of *reba* which translates to unearned profits but has become commonly equated with interest, or usury.[84] The Koranic justification for condemning usury comes from sura 2, versa 276: "They who swallow down, shall arise in the resurrection only as he ariseth whom Satan hath infected by his touch. This, for that they say, 'Selling is only the like of usury:' and yet God hath allowed selling, and forbidden usury . . . "; and verse 278: "O believers!

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[83] This proved an erroneous assumption in the post-revolutionary period. Eventually Khomeini had to issue a *fatwa* allowing secular taxes.

[84] Some well known Islamic fundamentalist scholars and leaders, for example Muhammad Abduh, have issued fatwas allowing for limited forms of interest. But this is not the case regarding the ruling ulama in Iran.

Fear God and abandon your remaining usury, if ye are indeed believers."; and finally verse 280: "If anyone find difficulty in discharging a debt, then let there be a delay until it be easy for him: but if ye remit it as alms it will be better for you, if ye knew it."

As Al-Omar and Abdel-Haq assert: "In its widest general implication *reba* signifies any increase of capital not justified by a risk taken" (8). The underlying social motive of this precept is to protect the borrower in loan transactions, by ensuring that if there is to be shared profits, there must be a corresponding shared risk. Even in many non-Islamic (but Muslim) states,[85] interest-free banks exist and operate.[86] Banks of course, are still expected to turn a profit, primarily through charging flat fees on loans, or through cooperative formats that see the banks claim ownership of a percentage of the enterprise.[87] But at the same time, profit is not supposed to be the primary motive of an Islamic bank. When issuing loans, instead of deciding which business to lend to purely on projected profits, banks are expected to make their decision based on how much a given business will contribute to society as a whole (Al-Omar and Abdel-Haq). So once again, one witnesses a clear subordination of economic interests to social ones.

Further, this principle is extended by the rejection of the concepts *gharar* (speculative risk), and *maysir* (gambling). As I have already established, the economic sphere of the global capitalist system is characterized by a host of semi-nomadic TNCs, roaming the globe looking to set up shop wherever the highest returns on investment are ensured. However, another major aspect of global capitalism is speculative trading in currencies. The power of speculative capital is startling. As Susan Strange notes, the IMF and other global financial bodies, consider the global derivatives markets to be the most important financial innovation since the mid-1980s. Strange cites the value of outstanding derivatives contracts in 26 countries as 47.5 trillion in March 1995, that is, twice the world's total economic

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[85] An Islamic state is one run by Shari'a, whereas a Muslim state simply implies a state in which the majority of citizens are Muslims.

[86] However, while theoretically these banks operate on an usury-free model, contemporary economic realities have forced many to devise creative schemes by which to side step this Islamic principle (see Al-Omar and Abdel-Haq for examples of these practices).

[87] See Amuzegar 107, for other profit making strategies

output. Further, all but 2% of this figure is constituted of trade in currencies (Strange 30). Now, while futures can act as an incredible incentive to investment, it also represents a major source of economic instability. Essentially, speculative traders are high-stake gamblers in a de-regulated global economic system that Strange labels "Casino Capitalism." The dangers of allowing derivatives trading to play such a central role in the global economy is most salient when one considers speculating on currencies. Literally, overnight as a result in a drop in speculator confidence, the value of a given country's currency can depreciate dramatically – and by extension – the value of its citizens savings can be reduced to corresponding levels. Thus, one can see the regulating force of an economic ideology that condemns the concept of speculative risk in practice. But ultimately, speculative markets are driven by endless potential in the form of unearned revenues or usury. The dramatic rise of mutual fund and other such speculative investment schemes is indicative of how not only the extremely wealthy are involved in this trend, but also the Western lower classes. In short, capitalism thrives, indeed depends, on the principle of interest. As such, any movement that seriously threatens continued wealth accumulation in this manner, seriously threatens the global capitalist system.

Waste

An understanding of Islamic economics cannot be comprehensive if the analysis focuses exclusively on the macro-level as I have thus far. In fact, it is the morality that regulates the individual Muslim's economic behaviour that in theory poses the greatest threat to consumerism. I have already touched on such issues as the emphasis on dressing modestly and avoiding behaviour that might instil envy in others, but these ideas do not fall under the category of economic in its common usage. However, there are some specifically Islamic economic rules at the micro-level that, when adhered to, discourage consumerism.

The Koran contains several suras that deal with the concept of waste in the context of economic transactions. For example, sura 17, verse 28-29 read: "And to him who is of kin render his due, and also to the poor and to the wayfarer; yet waste

not wastefully / For the wasteful are brethren of the Satans, and Satan was ungrateful to his Lord" (17:28-29).

An even more poignant anti-consumerist announcement emerges in sura 2, verse 184: "Consume not your wealth among yourselves in vain things . . ." (2:184). This is an important verse in the context of this thesis as it provides a fairly unambiguous denunciation of buying frivolous items. The arsenal of Western consumerism is armed with goods whose defining feature is their utter superflousness.[88] Of course, without further clarification what exactly constitutes a "vain purchase," is left to the individual's discretion. As such, the never-ending debate regarding the definition of needs and wants reappears. Khomeini however, took it upon himself to ensure the Iranian populace would not have to face this dilemma.

In much the same way that Islam itself became the antithesis of the West, generally products and services representative of the West became un-Islamic in the eyes of the Revolutionary regime. But this list was restricted primarily to products that had no apparent social utility. So, for example, while cosmetics, childrens' toys, and tight fitting, brand-name clothing were denounced, other Western goods like television, military hardware, and automobiles were considered Western products that could be utilized in responsible and ethical ways to promote the interests of the Islamic state. Of course this does not offer an absolutely concrete list of acceptable goods, but it certainly provides for Iranians a good framework in which to decide at their own discretion, i.e., it would not be difficult to determine whether the regime would approve of specific products and practices. Further, in some cases where the Islamic acceptability of certain products was unclear – for example playing chess or Western style musical instruments – Khomeini passed ordinances making it clear.

It is well known that Khomeini himself detested waste. Besides his simple lifestyle and limited personal belongings, he publicly denounced practices like leaving lights on after leaving a room and spending money on taxis when you can walk (Abrahamian 50). I will touch more on this issue in chapter eight, but for now

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[88] I am reminded once again of a headline from *The Onion:* "Should the U.S. Impose Limits on Incredibly Stupid Shit?" (www.theonion.com).

suffice it to say that on the subject of waste, Khomeini led by example. And indeed, the Islamic precept forbidding waste is enshrined in the Constitution. Chapter 4, article 43f, states that the economy of Iran will be premised in part on "the prohibition of extravagance and wastefulness in all matters related to the economy, including consumption, investment, production, distribution, and services; . . . " (Algar 44).

To recap then, despite regional variations, fundamental economic precepts advocated in Islam, if implemented on a larger scale, would pose a serious challenge to the existing global economic order *and* the culture-ideology of consumerism. Regarding the former claim, the Islamic imperative of approaching the economic as a means to an end (versus an end in itself) inhibits the "growth at all costs" mentality that characterizes contemporary capitalism. Couple this notion with the rejection of specific capitalist practices (interest, lowering taxes, currency speculation) and the challenge proves more severe. As to the latter (cultural) consideration, the denunciation of waste and conspicuous consumption represents an ideological deterrent to consumerism.

Chapter 8: Taghlid

While any particular enchantment is active and valid, its mythological components make life meaningful and trustworthy, even as they extract a heavy toll of commitment and sacrifice (Chelkowski and Dabashi 38).

As Azari notes, one of the fundamental differences between Shi'ism and Sunni'ism, is their differing views regarding the concept of *taghlid*, or imitation/following. While both sects subscribe to a variation of this notion based on a Koranic verse commanding Muslims to obey the "issuers of orders," Sunnis interpret this to mean anyone (secular or religious) in power, while Shi'as believe it refers solely to the Imams (or legitimate surrogate religious leaders in place until the hidden Imam returns) (Azari 27). The Shi'a perception of taghlid is a powerful and potentially revolutionary force as it provides divine justification for the overthrow of corrupt rulers. The very first question that Khomeini deals with in his *Resalah Towzih al Masael* is on the subject of taghlid.[89] He claims:

> Problem #1. A Moslem's belief in the fundamentals of religion must be based upon reason and he may not practice imitation in regards to fundamentals of the religion, that is accepting someone else's statement without reasoning. But in regards to the precepts (ahkram) of the religion he must either be an Expert (Mujtahid) and arrive at those precepts by reasoning or he imitates an Expert, that is, he acts according to his orders (1).

This strongly reflects Khomeini's belief that only the clergy are fit to rule. It also hints at the source of his authoritarian tendencies. Iranians were expected to conform to his decrees and indeed, as the first page in his Resalah illustrates, it was blasphemous not to.

However, the concept of taghlid also emphasizes the importance of using the lives of great Muslim leaders as models of behaviour and moral guidance. As such, one can learn a lot from examining the "culture heroes" of such a society.[90] More

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[89] A Resalah is basically a manuscript describing the everyday rules for Muslims to follow. Generally, any Muslim scholar, must write a Resalah before he will be acknowledged by his peers and followers with the title of Ayatollah (similar to the relationship between PhDs and their dissertations).

[90] The term culture hero is borrowed from Herbert Marcuse. He asserts that an analysis of the predominate symbols contained within a given society's popular myth and lore, can reveal aspects of that society's hegemonic reality principle. Culture heroes are those historic figures " . . . who have persisted in imagination as symbolizing the attitude and the deeds that have determined the fate of mankind" (Marcuse, Eros and Civilization 146). In Western society he cites the example of

specifically, if one looks at the popular and government-disseminated discourse surrounding these personalities, one can extrapolate some of the values and mores the leaders aim to embed in the collective psyche of the nation. So it should be stressed that this chapter is less about exploring taghlid as an Islamic concept, than it is a discourse analysis of cultural figures in a society that emphasizes emulation thereof.

Muhammad the Apostle of God

As would be expected, Muhammad is constructed as the archetypal male Muslim. His words and deeds are deemed eternal and infallible; his morality defines morality. Indeed, after the Koran, the documentation of his life, represented in the *Hadith*, is the second most important source of Islamic law.

Even though Muhammad is perceived as the greatest Muslim – indeed human being – in history, in many ways this makes a proper discourse analysis of his life difficult. He was the one that brought the Truth to the world, and as such his greatness is taken for granted. There is no specific aspect of his character that Muslim scholars focus on, as he represents the *essence* of Islam. He is not associated with any particular type of behaviour or event, but *all* that he did and was involved in is glorified. He seems to be more an *ideal* than an authentic historical figure. I have throughout this thesis already sufficiently cited aspects of his life and thought to illustrate the way in which he is constructed as an Islamic model of behaviour. Consequently, and for the sake of brevity, I will not examine his life any further here.

Ali the Commander of the Believers

In the Shi'a tradition, Ali is the second most revered figure. Shi'ism as a distinct group within the wider Islamic rubric begins with the circumstances surrounding his life immediately after the death of Muhammad. The issue of who should succeed the Prophet split his followers into two groups. Those who advocated

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Prometheus as the archetypal male figure who represents the ideals of the "performance principle," i.e., productiveness and toil.

Muhammad's closest male relative (Ali) became known as the Shi'as, while those who opted for the wisest of Muhammad's companions (Abu Bakr) became the Sunnis. The proponents of Abu Bakr were victorious in this political struggle and he became the first *Caliph*.

From a Shi'a perspective this story is constructed as one of grave injustice and betrayal.[91] The leaders of the community betrayed Ali, the rightful successor.[92] As such, Shi'as do not recognize the first three Caliphs, instead beginning their *Imamate* with Ali when he was installed as the fourth Caliph. Subsequently, during his reign as Imam, Ali was the object of other similar betrayals which I will look at now.

When Ali was named the first Imam after the death of *Uthman* (the third Caliph), the claim to this title was immediately challenged by *Mu'awiya*. This was the second betrayal. The armies of Ali and Mu'awiya did battle. At one point, with Ali clearly on the verge of victory at the battle of Siffin, soldiers of the *Ummayid*[93] army approached Ali's men with Korans attached to their raised spears, requesting arbitration to end the dispute. According to Shia's, the Ummayids offered bribes to Ali's men, and the Imam's soldiers were taken in by this ruse. No sucker, Ali opposed the appeal for arbitration, but his men refused to listen and he was forced to capitulate. The arbitration worked in Mu'awiya's favour and not long after, Ali's army realized their folly. Consequently, a large faction of his soldiers condemned Ali for compromising with Mu'awiya – the very same soldiers that insisted on the arbitration in the first place – and seceded from his ranks (Ali 186). This group became known as the Kharijites, and one of their members went on to murder Ali. This was betrayal number three.

The story goes, that through all these adversities Ali remained understanding and morally consistent in his doctrine. His behaviour and preaching never fluctuated with his changing circumstances. It is this steadfastness and grace under fire so to

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[91] As will be illustrated more in depth in the section dealing with Husayn, this theme of betrayal and persecution is one that underlies much of Shi'a thought and collective self-perception.

[92] In the Nahj ul Balagha, Ali explains that after Muhammad died, he and his followers were distracted by ensuring the Prophet had an appropriate funeral. At the same time, Abu Bakr and his companions were more concerned with getting to Mecca and establishing Muhammad's successor. As a result, Ali was looked over for the position of Caliph because he cared more for showing proper respect to his father in law, than ensuring he succeeded him as leader of the umma (202).

[93] Mu'awiya belonged to the clan of Umayya, whose members were know as the Umayyids.

speak, that defines Ali as a religious and cultural icon; a model of piety and persistence.

On another level, it is the incredible humbleness and wisdom of Ali that is revered. There is the story in the Nahj ul Balagha in which *Abdullah ibn Abbas*, during a stop with the Imam's army on the way to do battle at Basra, comes across Ali mending his old and decrepit pair of shoes. Abbas inquires as to why he does not simply purchase a new pair. Ali responds with a sermon to his men on the importance of hard work and simple living *vis-a-vis* righteousness (Ali 43).

In another example, Shi'a discourse asserts that when he had further spread the Islamic empire, Ali appointed provincial governors based solely on their Islamic virtues. One of these individuals was *Salman Farsi* in Khuzistan who refused to live in luxurious palaces and rented out half a shoemaker's shop for his office (Azari 23). Further, Ali was renowned for his poor clothing, simple diet and that he rode a donkey. He did all this to simply prevent arousing envy in his followers (Azari 23).

Shariati depicts Ali, through the words of Muhammad as " . . . a person of the strongest faith, a man who is the most knowledgeable among those with knowledge, the most ethical amongst those with ethics and the highest of spirits among the spiritual" (46). And Taleghani echoes this thought:

> Did anyone see 'Ali in the lanes and bazaars as other than a common person? If someone went to his home, was it distinguished from other people's houses? Do you imagine that his wife and children, his daughter, were different from other people? This is an exemplar; this exemplifies the lofty quality of Islamic government and rule . . . (97).

And finally, Ali is recognised for his incredible generosity. In one instance, during a period of fasting, he is reputed to have offered his family's food to wounded soldiers making their way home from battle.[94] The next night he did the same for a troupe of blind beggars. And on the third night, he sacrificed the cakes Fatima had made to a group of starving children. All in all, Ali and his family went three days without food (Knappert 260).

To summarize, Ali is regarded in many ways as a figure constructed in the image of Muhammad, i.e., revered for his completely rounded Islamic personality. He represents every aspect of what a good Muslim should be, just as Muhammad

does. One would argue that such a figure is essential to Shi'ism as a source of validation. For a faith that represents a relatively small minority in the greater Islamic world, Shi'ism demands a bona fide cultural leader. In contrast, Abu Bakr – the first Caliph – does not hold such a pre-eminent position in Sunni tradition. Certainly Sunnis hold him in high regard as a source of emulation, but not on the same scale as Ali for Shi'as. As such, the life and personality of Ali can be considered an Iranian cultural template; a framework in which to understand the general principles and ideals Khomeini and his followers wished the populace to orient themselves.

Husayn the King of Martyrs

No historical Islamic figure stirs up as much passion and raw emotion in Shi'a Muslims as that of Husayn. The son of Ali and third Imam, Husayn represents the epitome of martyrdom. The first ten days of the Islamic month *Muharran* are dedicated to the memory of the circumstances surrounding his heroic death at the battle of *Karbala* (Iraq) in 680. This battle, as Chelkowski and Dabashi note, serves as the most important historical/mythological reference point in Shi'ism: "The Karbala event, as a defining master narrative, has remained at the heart of Shi'a collective consciousness, to be reinvented for any number of political ends" (46). The story goes that Husayn and 72 of his followers died when they faced the 4000-strong army of the Umayyid caliph *Yazid*. The festival of Muharran includes re-enactments of the battle and long street processions of men performing acts of self-flagellation, flanked by rows of mourning women. His figure is so revered that from the perspective of some Shias, a pilgrimage to his shrine at Karbala is the equivalent of one thousand trips to Mecca, one thousand martyrdoms and one thousand days of fasting (Braswell Jr. 28).

Husayn is the archetypal martyr. Taleghani, referring to Husayn, describes the essence of martyrdom:

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[94] Fasting is restricted to the daytime.

> One who has understood this truth, this divine intent, and who has stood fast and rendered up his life for the sake of truth, is termed . . . a martyr . . . that is, one who has witnessed to . . . the Truth, whose death was not due to accident, to the prompting of feelings and sentiments. Such a person has perceived . . . the Truth and its intent and has been felled in his own blood for the Truth's sake. This is someone who seeks grace, to draw closer to God not by indulging personal desire and fancy but by transcending them (99).

In general, the memory of Husayn was an integral motivating force during the revolution.[95] Indeed, Khomeini competently tapped into the collective Shi'a passion associated with his martyrdom. For example, during Muharran in 1963, Khomeini delivered the most insulting and powerful public anti-shah denunciation the Iranian populace had yet witnessed. The speech compared his challenging of the shah (and his masters in Israel), to that of Husayn's opposition to the Umayyids. Together, the charisma of Khomeini and the memory of Husayn was a powerful combination. As Baqer Moin notes: "The very mention of the name 'Hossein' by Khomeini was enough to make people weep" (104). While Moin's description might be a bit exaggerated, Khomeini's Muharran speech did result in the largest anti-shah demonstration to date which in turn led to days of rioting and many deaths.

In contrast to the figure of Ali, one particular characteristic of Husayn's life is stressed in Khomeinist rhetoric – his martyrdom. Martyrdom is portrayed as the greatest proof of unquestioning faith and a concept necessary to sustain revolutionary commitment before and after the revolution. It was utilized not only to whip up the crowds in the pre-revolutionary period as cited above, but also as a recruitment strategy, and general justification, for the eight years of war with Iraq, which witnessed the deaths/martyrdoms of hundreds of thousands of Iranian youths. Khomeini aspired to create an Iranian populace composed of Husayns, and indeed to a certain extent, the long-term fortunes of the revolution depended on it.

Imam Khomeini

Leading up to, and in the period following the revolution, it became common practice among many Iranians to refer to Khomeini as "Imam." This proved

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[95] For example a commonly invoked revolutionary slogan was: "Our movement is Husseini, Our Leader is Khomeini" (Taheri 231).

extremely controversial, as it would be considered heresy for an individual to make such a self-proclamation. It is true that Khomeini never described himself as such, but on the other hand, he never publicly discouraged the practice. But the fact that many Iranians willingly spoke of him in such a manner indicates a certain reverence for the Ayatollah and a profound charismatic element to his leadership. Khomeini embodied the values of the revolution and sought to foster this image. As such, in my mind he constitutes a bonafide Iranian culture hero.

As Michael M.J. Fischer illustrates, the discourse surrounding Khomeini's life closely parallels those of the Imams:

> The themes of his persona of enduring distress and injustice include a father unjustly killed, a son deprived of rightful possessions (father, land, position, children), and the need to pursue justice in the face of overwhelming odds. These are the themes of Ali and Husain and of the Imams. According to the Shiite account all the imams were either slain or poisoned (except the last who will return); the theme of poison – Western colonialism as a poison – is one that Khomeini plays on (161)

Further, just as the Prophet and Imams, Khomeini was reputed to live an extremely humble life, devoid of luxury. It was commonly understood that he ate only the simplest of food, wore the same plain (but clean) clothes for years, owned a mere two turbans, lived in the humblest of homes and refused luxurious gifts (Abrahamian 50), and when he died he left to his son a single carpet by way of inheritance. In short, he was the classic populist and charismatic leader. Now while the validity of this description is largely irrelevant (it is the discourse that matters), I would like to note that I have not come across any writers, even the most voracious critics of Khomeini's rule, who have challenged this perception of personal piety. While other revolutionary elites (the *mullahs*), in particular those in the post-Khomeini era, have been attacked as hypocrites by all quarters (including supporters of the revolution), these assertions have seemingly not extended to Khomeini. This I would assert is quite important, as strong and relatively consistent leadership can play an extremely powerful role in sustaining popular commitment to revolutionary ideals and help to maintain unity. It does seem that in some ways, the figure and image of Khomeini contributed to the success of the revolution at least in its germinal stages.

To end this section I would like to briefly describe the events that transpired surrounding the funeral of Khomeini to illustrate what appears to be a genuine

manifestation of how passionately a significant portion of the Iranian population perceived their revolutionary leader.

The Ayatollah died on June 3, 1989. According to Eliz Sanasarian, as his coffin was lowered by helicopter to its final resting place, a huge crowd surged aggressively forward in the hope of touching the casket. In the course of this mayhem, 10,000 people were injured and three were crushed to death. On the day after his funeral, two more people were killed and hundreds more injured. And by the 40th day, the crowd had swelled into the millions and an additional 30, 000 individuals were injured (Sanasarian 189). Now it is well known that authoritarian regimes have a tendency to orchestrate events to project an image of mass support, but if the numbers cited above are even close to accurate, the outbreak of hysterical, and indeed fatal, mourning at Khomeini's funeral surely surpasses the state's ability to mobilize people not genuinely eager to participate.

Recap of the Male Culture-Heroes

Now having explored the lives and personalities surrounding three of the most dominant masculine figures in Khomeinist discourse, the question remains: how do the values embodied in these figures contribute to an anti-consumerist movement? To reiterate, this analysis is focussed more in the realm of the abstract, or the ideological sphere, than in policy. As such, it is less quantifiable. Leaders and interest groups utilize discourse to get people to *want* what they want, as opposed to repressive policies, which make people *do* what they want through force. However, although less measurable, ideological discourse can be just as – if not more – powerful in effect, i.e., the less force necessary to enforce policy, the stronger the regime, but I digress.

In some cases the values represented in the figures of Ali, Husayn and Khomeini are blatantly anti-consumerist, when examined in the context of my earlier discussion of the primary tenets of consumerism. For example, the humbleness of Ali and Khomeini discourages envy formation while their piety and utter devotion to ritual and dogma lends itself to the fostering of social conformity. There is no need to

expand on these points, as it would be an exercise in the redundant. The reason I included in this section stories describing their qualities was simply to reinforce the assertions in earlier sections. Instead, I will focus on another theme, common to all three male culture-heroes, but perhaps less obvious as representative of anti-consumerist discourse – that of persecution and perseverance.

Although the specific circumstances surrounding the persecution of the figures discussed here vary, it is a common theme to all three. Ali's life was marked by successive betrayals and extreme poverty. Husayn's martyrdom represented his willingness to stand up for his faith against overwhelming odds. And Khomeini's history is characterized by injustice after injustice. In all three cases, the figures never bowed to the pressure and struggled on.

What do these stories transmit then, to devout Iranians? At the micro (personal) level it is clear: accept your lot; remain true to your ideals in the face of adversity for you will be rewarded in the afterlife; find strength in your misery, etc.. But it is on a more macro socio-economic level, in the context of globalization that these ideals attain a more profound significance, that is, at the level of the Iranian state itself. To harken back to the introduction of this thesis, the effects of globalization are such that options regarding social and economic policies at the state level are limited at best. Everywhere, quality of life expectations are becoming synonomous with those of the Western middle-class. This is the standard that members of virtually all cultures increasingly measure themselves to. States have had no choice but to adopt precepts of neo-liberalism, or forfeit all genuine (Eurocentric) aspirations toward development. However, as I have argued, this is largely a result of the strategic spread of the culture ideology of consumerism. If a given population *en masse* was to reject consumerism, the state in question could construct an alternative social structure that would satisfy the needs and desires of its constituents. Now, hypothetically speaking, imagine a single state – in the midst of a globalized world system – pursues a radical departure from the norm. Imagine it rejects the neoliberal maxim of liberalizing trade and instead re-nationalizes all foreign trade. Imagine this same state ignores the structural need to attract foreign investment and instead renationalizes virtually all large enterprises. Imagine it

eschews the notion of dismantling the welfare state and instead aims to reconstruct it on a scale unprecedented in its history. And finally imagine it largely resists the international trend towards, and increasingly agreed upon, liberal definition of human rights, instead opting to institute laws and polices the majority of the rest of the world views as barbarous, archaic and oppressive – in many ways the negation, or antithesis of the dominant international perception of fundamental human rights as defined in the UN Charter. What would happen to such a state?

Well, everything that I spoke of earlier. Citizens would flee, particularly the rich and educated professionals, leaving drastic shortages in essential services. Capital would take flight, deflating the economy and creating dramatic levels of inflation. Standards of living would drop. On the pretext of human rights abuses, the country would experience mass criticism in the form of economic and diplomatic blockades from members of the international community, leaving the state an international pariah. This hypothetical state is of course post-revolutionary Iran. But it is also the story of Ali, Husayn, and Khomeini. From the Shi'a tradition, heavily influenced by notions of martyrdom, the Islamic republic is a small island of justice and virtue, surrounded by a vast sea of decadence and immorality. Khomeini knew this would be the case, and he was prepared to deal with it. But to expect his people would be willing to accept it is another issue. As such, he had to do everything in his power to transmit his personal devotion to the general populace. Whereas concrete successes at ground level certainly helped his cause (like the immediate redistribution of wealth to the lower classes) this by no means assured prolonged support. Thus, in the ideological sphere he needed to convince the people to conceptualize their nation and revolution as they would the lives of the Imams. As individuals, and as a united country they must persevere through their poverty like Ali; stand fast in their faith like Husayn despite the adversity they would face on a daily basis; and borrow from their spiritual leader Imam Khomeini, as a source of inspiration and emulation. Without this sort of ideological commitment and unity, the Islamic republic in its ideal form, and by extension – its anti-consumerist paradigm – could not last. And indeed it did not, but that is the subject of another thesis.

Fatima the Mother of Her Father

The four Iranian culture heroes examined to this point are similar in many respects. All four epitomize the Shi'a masculine ideal and indeed many of their qualities transcend Islamic conceptual gender divisions. But of course in a culture that encourages a well-defined and dichotomous contrast between men and women, a female culture hero that acts as an ideal model for the feminine is bound to exist. And indeed, it does in the form of *Fatima*.[96]

Shariati has written perhaps the most extensive work on Fatima – Fatima is Fatima – and many regard his writings as having a profound inspirational and mobilizing effect on women during the revolution. It is his work that I will rely on primarily for this discussion. However, it should be recalled that after the revolution, as with much of his thought, the more conservative clergy denounced Shariati's more progressive view of women as un-Islamic. Regardless, most Iranians agree upon his recount of Fatima's life and behaviour. It was the philosophy that he produced as a result of his interpretation – the way he understood her life and relationship with her father and husband – that got him into trouble.

It is significant that Muhammad had no sons. At this time, it was common practice to bury newborn daughters, as they could easily bring disgrace to the family by marrying someone of lower status. Daughters were considered a nuisance while sons were valued for many reasons, most importantly because they would carry on the family's name. So here was the great Prophet, "cut off" so to speak, because his wife failed to produce a male heir.[97] However, Shariati interprets this as a profound act by God. It was the ultimate example of His will to end patriarchy and the perceived inferiority of women in pre-Islamic Arabia. Fatima represents this will; a

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[96] It should be noted that prior to the revolution, Khomeini and his supporters encouraged women to stand up and fight the tyranny of the shah. For this purpose they invoked the memory of *Zainab* – who staunchly defended her martyred brother Husayn after his death at Karbala – to mobilize women in common protest. However, after the revolution, the prominence of Zainab was dramatically reduced, replaced by Fatima as the feminine ideal promoted in government discourse (Haeri 188).

[97] According to Shariati, at the time, the phrase "cut off" was commonly used to describe a man with no sons. When Fatima was born, and it was unrealistic to imagine the fifty-year-old *Khadija* would produce another child, the Ummayids rejoiced at the irony: "The happiness and hope of the Hashimi

symbol of change. Muhammad, his teachings and heritage, would necessarily be passed on through the medium of a young woman. While this made her special, it also ensured her a life of persecution and an incredible responsibility to bear. Further, she was all too aware of this fact, as Shariati notes, Fatima knew " . . . she must not have a single moment of peace in life for that might keep her from constant 'becoming.' Sorrow and loneliness were the water and earth of this girl . . ." (Shariati 47).

In terms of her personality, the primary characteristic that Shariati focuses on is her relationship with her father Muhammad. From an early age, Fatima seemed able to sense the importance of her father, and the dangerous position that this importance placed him in. Her steadfast devotion to him was absolute. For example, she refused to let him walk through the bazaar unaccompanied; she was always at his side. Through all his trials and mistreatments by enemies, she would be there to console and comfort him. As a result she became known as "the mother of her father." Her devotion was such that early on, after the death of her mother Khadija, she vowed never to marry, as her whole being was devoted to her father (Shariati 43). However this promise was not to be kept. After the death of Khadija, Muhammad married the young Ayesha who became a new source of inspiration and solace for him.[98] Ali and Fatima were married soon after.

At this point, the emphasis of the narrative of Fatima's life is transferred from one of devotion to father, to devotion to husband, but the same theme continues. Her life was still one characterized by poverty and perseverance. She tirelessly worked without complaint, knowing that to fulfill her divine duty (to become the ideal Muslim woman)

> . . . required that she ascend many steps and fly many flights into higher worlds while remaining step by step with Ali. She must share with Ali in his sorrows and in his difficulties. She had the greatest responsibility in the history of freedom, jihad and humanity. She was the link in a chain which extended from Abraham to the prophet, from Husayn to the Guided One (mahdi), from the beginning to the end of history (Shariati 47).

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tribe fell to the Umayyids. Enemies whispered, 'Muhammad is cut-off. The man who was the link in his family chain had four daughters. Nothing more'" (Shariati 38).

[98] Ayesha is generally recognised as Muhammad's favourite wife.

Although Shariati's perception of women based on his interpretation of the life of Fatima, is considered to be quite liberal from an Islamic perspective, his ideas still contain a strong element of traditional gender roles and responsibilities. While he nowhere asserts that Islam demands women be covered or restricts them to the private social sphere, he does represent Fatima as the archetypal obedient wife and daughter. Her role, although just as important, was still a supportive one to the male leads. While she was intelligent, strong, and righteous, she was also nurturing, subservient, and ultimately a housewife. Her responsibilities are well defined, and they constitute the guidelines of a model for contemporary Iranian women.

Clearly Khomeini encouraged the image of Fatima as the preferred feminine model for Iranians. By way of illustration, he established "Woman's Day" as a national holiday on the date of her birth.[99] On one such occasion in 1989, he is reputed to have grown furious when on a radio program, a young woman proclaimed to a reporter that a Japanese soap-opera star was her greatest role model. Fatima, she asserted, lived too long ago to relate to. In a written correspondence to the radio station, Khomeini demanded that the reporter and everyone else involved with the incident be hanged (Omid 170). In the end, cooler heads prevailed with the mediation of Ayatollah *Montazeri*. However, the program was cancelled and its producers fired.

Further, the various laws and ordinances regarding the proper conduct of women were by and large formed consistent with Khomeini's perspective. If women wanted to enter into the traditionally male sectors of the workforce, it was extremely difficult considering the barriers to women in the various post-secondary programs mentioned in chapter six. Moving away from their roles as primary caregivers and domestic servitude to their husbands was discouraged through such policies as the elimination of the "Family Protection Act." Ultimately, just like Fatima, women were expected to take pride in, and accept their sacred designation as the foundation of society, even though they were by and large relegated to the fringe. And this hints at the crux of the issue.

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[99] To commemorate the first Woman's Day, the state issued a special issue stamp that depicted a veiled Fatima, carrying a small child with a machine gun dangling from its right hand: "Religious piety, revolutionary chastity and breeding soldiers for the revolution are the three instant messages with

While the law, enforced by the security forces, prevented women from full participation in Iranian society – and by extension consumer culture – the ideological atmosphere sought to eradicate any female aspirations to do so. The dominant discourse actively encouraged an image of women not as consumers but as producers (in a non-economically quantifiable sense). Women were not expected to work in the formal labour market (reducing their purchasing power), or desire goods beyond those necessary to care for their families. In short, Khomeini aimed to (re)establish a hegemonic conception of the "feminine," one ultimately inconsistent to the optimal functioning of a consumption-oriented society.

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which this stamp identifies and celebrates the faceless and bodiless woman" (Chelkowski and Dabashi 252).

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Now what can be made of all that has been written here? To briefly recap, in the body of this thesis I have attempted to raise a series of questions and problems relating to the current process of globalization. First, I have shown that the most appropriate way to begin to understand globalization is through Marxist theories of capitalist expansion. As a result, I have argued that the concepts of globalization and capitalism can be perceived as virtually synonymous. Next, by borrowing from the Global Systems theoretical framework of Leslie Sklair, I have illustrated the central role the culture-ideology of consumerism plays in the expansion and reproduction of the system as a whole. From this, I assert that a genuine anti-globalization movement would be one that challenges the fundamental underpinnings of consumerism. Third, I examined the discourse of Islamic Fundamentalism, and the ideas and policies of Khomeinist Iran as a case study of such a movement.

Consumerism, as the culture-ideology of capitalism, has proven to be an all encompassing and incredibly powerful force. Contemporary history attests to this fact. As I argued in this project, Khomeinist Iran represented an attempt to establish a society founded on anti-consumerist principles. My assertion is that this attempt enjoyed some success in the formative years of the revolution, but ultimately failed. But it is significant to note that even for this short-lived success, the power of consumer culture was only challenged by a physical uprising and subsequent forced imposition from above. There is no question that the social model that emerged was marked by a strict totalitarianism and suspension of individual liberties. It begs the question, if this is what it takes to resist consumerism, is consumerism worth resisting?

However, this assumes that Khomeinist social experiment failed due to the overwhelming desire of Iranians to consume conspicuously. Surely there are many factors involved, but perhaps the prime motivator for social reform was the desire for freedom in general, not simply the freedom to shop? If this is the case, a glimmer of light shines through the cloud of pessimism that critics of globalization view the world.

There does seem to be an inherent human drive that yearns to be free. That is, the right to exercise one's individual liberty and autonomy is a universal desire. It has become a truism that states that deny their citizens such freedoms will eventually implode. The totalitarian Soviet bloc countries learned this lesson, as Iran is now, and Afghanistan inevitably will.[100] I should note that I am not suggesting that all non-liberal democratic states are doomed to implosion, but that all countries that fail to develop a strong ideological hegemony are. That is, those states that rely heavily on coercive force to maintain power. So for example, theoretically a secular dictatorship, or Islamic theocracy for that matter, could maintain a non-liberal democratic system, provided it enjoyed the support of its people (and allows its citizens a certain degree of individual freedoms).[101] With all this in mind, it becomes clear that the challenge of any anti-consumerist movement is to dissociate the ability to consume uninhibitedly, with the notions of freedom, liberty, and happiness.

Admittedly, this paper was written primarily for a Western audience, although the issues are relevant to all societies as globalization is a truly universal process. But consumerism is a product of the West, and most established and pervasive in the culture thereof. Thus, for the social subjects of Western societies, envisioning possible forms of resistance is problematic, and indeed imagining an alternative form of social organization premised on fundamentally different principles is virtually inconceivable or, when different options are proposed, they are often dismissed as utopian. The power of any hegemonic social structure is based in large part on its ability to eliminate alternative possibilities from the dominant discourse and indeed the imagination of the average subject.

However, as I aimed to illustrate, there are social movements and lines of thought alive in the world today that do represent such alternative social paradigms, in particular, some forms of Islamic Fundamentalism. I examined the revolutionary state of Iran, primarily because it provides a real-life example of where one such alternative was actually implemented and (perhaps) sustained for an, albeit short,

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[100] Indeed, Afghanistan will be an interesting case to observe as the revolution there progresses. In many ways, the present situation in Afghanistan resembles the formative years of the Iranian revolution, and could have been used as the case study for this thesis (if not for the lack of literature on the *Taliban* regime).

period. Now, obviously the idea of an authoritarian Islamic state, governed by the dictates of Shari'a is not a viable, or desirable option for those raised in the traditions of Western liberal democracy.[102] No, the world-views of these two traditions (in their ideal forms) are fundamentally irreconcilable. Liberal democratic conceptions of human rights, equality, principles of individual liberty, freedom of expression, and democracy (as equated with liberal democratic institutions), are too strongly embedded in the collective Western psyche, that any proposed system that fundamentally rejects them would surely prove unacceptable. Further, writing as a product of Western culture myself, I would argue that such a rejection of these ideals is not absolutely necessary. But this is not to say that those Western subjects opposed to consumerism cannot learn from the example of a case study such as Khomeinist Iran.

In the course of this thesis, I attempted to illustrate theoretically what was *needed* to counter, or at least tame, consumerism. I then showed how Khomeini attempted, in some cases overtly, and in others tacitly, to do just this. As was shown, the observations and opinions of Khomeini and the rest of Iran's revolutionary ideologues, regarding the global spread of Western cultural influence are extremely similar to those of mid-20th century Western anti-imperialists and contemporary critics of globalization. But certainly the Islamists' response to the process is a far cry from those same critics who would agree with their analysis. The Islamic republic then should not be perceived as a model of absolute emulation, but more an example from which principles can be extrapolated, i.e., similar abstract social ends should be sought through different means.

Khomeinism manifested itself on two levels – policy and ideological – and a Western anti-consumerist movement would have to do the same. At this point, I am more interested in the ideological side as the challenge to consumerism would be no less than a truly counter-hegemonic project. And of course, the first step in any such

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[101] Cuba might represent such a state, and there may be others.

[102] And indeed, Khomeinism turned out to be unacceptable for the majority of Iranians today. But one must remember the structure in Iran is simply one *version* of Islam. The failure of the Iranian revolution (in its original form and intent) by no means discredits Islam in general as a possible alternative form of social governance (for Muslims).

movement is the ideological war of position.[103] The ultimate question here is: how much would Western populations be willing to sacrifice in their personal lives for such a social transformation to be viable? I said earlier, that the resistance would not have to entail an utter *rejection* of key liberal democratic values, but it would certainly need a serious amount of *compromise*, or even better, a re-evaluation of the *meaning* of some core Western values.

So for example, the ideological trend in Western society that places the value of individual liberty increasingly above all others, would need to be checked and indeed reversed to more moderate levels. A Western secularized version of the umma might be the answer; a social paradigm that does not recognize national or ethnic borders, but perceives all of humanity as a global unit, wherein all individuals are important parts of a greater collective; a collective whose needs should always enjoy some level of precedence over those of the individual. In contrast to Khomeini's vision, this social category would have to allow for individuality to be exercised, but only within bounds that it does not result in a dramatic structural asymmetry in terms of socio-economic divides that characterizes the global capitalist system today. And it is important to remember that I am talking about ideology here, i.e., people have to *think* this way, and *want* the change. As such, ideally, any structural changes in terms of international policy on the part of governments and international organizations, would be an organic manifestation of popular will.

On another front, the material excess and decadence that defines the culture-ideology of consumerism would have to be fought and replaced by some form of culture-ideology of moderation. On a global level, not everyone can live a Western middle class lifestyle; resources are simply too limited. Moderation would have to be recognized as imperative to the establishment of a just global society. Excessive wealth and material accumulation would have to become stigmatized instead of acting as symbols of prestige and standards of success. In general, Islam attacks immoderate behaviour and accumulation, making them sins, whereas in a secular

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[103] I do not wish at this point to speculate on whether a violent "war of movement" would be necessary.

framework they could be seen as violations of fundamental human rights, or at their extreme, crimes against humanity.

As a derivative of the value of moderation, other consumerist concepts like fashion, obsoletism, and brand name fetishization would be challenged. Even the perception of physical beauty could be re-oriented from one stressing adornment to one sympathetic to minimalism; from make-up to make-down. It should be noted that many individuals and sub-cultural pockets within Western society already look at the world this way and hence it is *possible* for Western subjects to consider alternative value systems to the dominant one in place today.

In the realm of economics, some seriously profound conceptual re-structuring would be necessary. Consistent with the idea of a secularized global umma, would be a corresponding duty or acknowledged obligation to share and redistribute wealth. Just as zakat and khoms are moral imperatives in Islamic societies, the social utility of taxes would have to be considered integral to a fair global economic system. On a less individual level, among populations of different regions, where for example valuable natural resources are abundant, an ideological recognition that these resources belong to all of humanity would have to be developed. And thus, the wealth created and resources extracted from such regions would need to be willingly distributed to those people and regions in need. Once again, individualism *ad absurdum* is challenged, but on a more regional/geographical level. This all returns to the question of what people would be willing to give up in their everyday lives. Taxes and wealth redistribution schemes necessarily result in lower levels of disposable income and by extension – fewer toys.

So then, the ideas articulated above give one the sense of the ideological re-orientation necessary for the establishment of a Western anti-consumerist form of social organization. But I have shown that the ideological sphere of consumer culture is complemented and fortified by a sort of shopping infrastructure composed of various industries that encourage and facilitate hyper-consumption (the mass media, the internet, credit cards, advertising, fashion, etc.). In Iran, these industries were basically shut-down by rendering them illegal in so far as they would not function as a tool of the revolution, e.g., televisions were not outlawed but Western entertainment

was. So the taboo concept of censorship raises its ugly head. Would Western populations be willing to allow their governments the power to regulate all media transmissions at their own discretion, as practiced in Iran? Probably not. This would prove too inconsistent with the democratic sacred cow of freedom of speech, and indeed a policy option I would not advocate as necessary. Once again ideally, public will would demand greater regulation of these industries, and manifest objection to the privatization of public space. Another possibility would be that citizens, with their newly acquired anti-consumerist consciousness, would simply render advertising ineffective.

But the question remains whether governments should jump-start this process through limiting advertising and the various channels through which citizens are taught and able to consume? The answer: of course they should! But the current slate of neoliberal legislators representing the people of the Western nations certainly do not seem to have the political will to enact – or interest in contributing to – this sort of change. This is where perhaps the anti-globalization movement could play a role. It is widely acknowledged that this demographic has largely rejected traditional electoral politics in favour of direct action. Thus, for many of its members, no strong party affiliations are apparent. Although no statistics exist allowing us to get a clear sense of how large the anti-globalization movement is in terms of membership, I will operate on the premise that the number is significant, not so much as a threat to attain power in an election, but a group that would enjoy enough votes to at least be given notice by the established parties. A new left party, that somehow unifies the disparate elements of the anti-globalization movement, might be able to bring the issues surrounding consumerism into the mainstream political discourse. The power of such a party would be that it would develop out of an already established transnational movement. Effective resistance to globalization has to be globalized itself, and advocate, in essence, a different form of globalization (with anti-consumerism as one of its defining features).[104] But once again, I want to make it clear that I am not

[104] As Sklair notes, the international green movement may represent the germinal stages of such a transnational force, and perhaps the Greens should make incorporating the anti-globalization movement a priority. However, as the German situation attests, even the Greens are susceptible to the appropriating power of global capitalism whereby they compromised their radical critique of

necessarily advocating this idea as much as I am brainstorming possibilities for resistance in a Western context. But if there is anything I am convinced of, it is that the proposed change of which has been discussed here will not just happen. The only chance for it to be realized is through a long and engaged ideological struggle for control over the production of ideas. It is my hope that this thesis can provide some content that would aid in conceptualizing such a struggle.

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capitalism in the face of stark political realties once they were in a position of sharing legislative power.

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